UNIT13 KANT ON COPERNICAN REVOLUTION

UNIT STRUCTURE

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13.1 LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After going through this unit, you will be able to-

- know the distinction between Analytic and Synthetic judgments
- learn the differences between A priori and A posteriori judgments
- possibility of metaphysics
- synthetic A priori Knowledge

13.2 INTRODUCTION:

Immanuel Kant sets out to establish the sources, extent, and limits of synthetic a priori knowledge, with a view to ascertaining the prospects for metaphysics as a scientific enterprise. Kant defines a prioriknowledge as knowledge that is absolutely independent of all experience, and distinguishes it from empirical knowledge, whose sources lie in experience. The Critique's second edition frames its overarching goal as a general solution to the problem: How are synthetic judgments a priorijudgments possible? This formulation presupposes two important doctrines that Kant wants to establish in the Critique-First, to defend the possibility of scientific

and every day (common sense) knowledge against Hume's sceptical empiricism, and second, to show that traditional metaphysics is impossible.

The Critique's epistemological investigation aims to assure to reason its lawful claims, and dismiss all groundless pretensions, not by despotic decrees, but in accordance with reason's own eternal and unalterable laws. Kant's firm conviction regarding possession of synthetic a priori knowledge in the fields of mathematics, physics and metaphysics provides the backdrop for the Critique's claim to explain how such knowledge is possible. It is notable that Kant insists that relevant a priori knowledge in mathematics and physics is secure even without his explanation of its possibility. He writes that pure mathematics and pure natural science would not have needed, for the purpose of their own security and certainty, a deduction of the sort that we have accomplished for them both. The central purpose of the explanation, he explains, is not to correct a deficiency of a priori certainty in these sciences. It is to instruct us regarding the possibility of metaphysical knowledge more broadly by determining how far reason is to be trusted. The Critique does not, however, assert that all metaphysically necessary truths are cognizable a priori. It rejects that claim. For instance, the proposition, "God exists" is treated as metaphysically necessary true proposition, but Kant holds that we cannot have theoretical a priori knowledge of this truth in principle.

But although Kant hols that humans can have no knowledge about any non-empirical reality, he does not deny that the existence of such a reality is a legitimate topic of human concern. On the contrary, he believes that there are three specific topics of rationalist metaphysics that are legitimate and inevitable topics of human concern. These are God, human immortality and human freedom. Kant's position with respect to these topics is that although we cannot know whether God exists, whether there is an immortal human soul, or whether humans have free will, we may believe in God, immortality and freedom. Further more, for purposes of action and morality, we ought to believe in them despite the fact that there is no way we can

know whether these beliefs are true. He argues that whereas we must admit that our knowledge extends only as far as the limits of experience, still there are moral grounds for believing tin God, immortality and freedom.

As Kant puts it in a famous sentence, 'I have…found it necessary to deny knowledge, in order to make room for faith.'

Kant thus argues that transcendental critique does establish the possibility of synthetic a priori metaphysical knowledge, but only within very restricted limits. It should be noted that Kantian employment of the 'transcendental' corresponds with that of the 'critical'. Kant holds that transcendental philosophy is a critique, but not a doctrine of pure reason. The word 'pure' here means that it is a priori. Its utility is not to extend our knowledge, but only to clarify our reason, and keep reason free from errors. According to him, its purpose is not to extend knowledge, but only to correct it, and to supply a touchtone of the value, or lack of value, of all a priori knowledge. In Kant's analysis, it must begin with a critique of reason, instead of proceeding "dogmatically," i.e., by addressing its questions-about the existence of God, the immortality of the soul, the beginning of the world, and so on-without prior investigation into the basis of reason's entitlement to any such insights. It rules our traditionally central claims about the super sensible, and it overthrows the method of analysis favoured by Kant's rationalist predecessors in favour of transcendental arguments about the preconditions for experience. Thus the system of transcendental philosophy marks a departure from all previous metaphysics.

13.3 ANALYTIC AND SYNTHETIC JUDGMENTS

In order to understand synthetic a priori judgments in knowledge, Kant differentiates synthetic from the analytic judgments and a priori from the a posteriori judgments. Kant shows the distinction between the analytic and the synthetic judgments as in all judgments in which the relation of a subject to the predicate is possible in two different ways. Either the predicate B belongs to the subject A, as something, which is (covertly) contained in this concept A; or B lies outside the concept A, although it does indeed stand in

connection with it. In the one case, the judgment is regarded as analytic, and in the other it is regarded as synthetic. In an analytic judgment, the predicate is contained in the subject. Whereas, in a synthetic judgment, the predicate is not contained in the subject.

Kant elaborates further the distinction between analytic and the synthetic judgments. Kant remarks that the analytic judgment on the one hand is that, in which the connection of the predicate with the subject is thought through identity. The synthetic judgment, on the other hand, is that, in which this connection is thought without identity. Kant regards analytic judgment to be explicative, because the predicate is already contained in the subject. On the other hand, the synthetic judgment is ampliative, because the predicate is not inherent in the subject. Kant gives an example to illustrate an analytic judgment. For instance, 'All bodies are extended', is an analytic judgment, here the concept of the predicate, that is, 'extension', is already contained in the concept of the subject, that is, 'bodies'. But in the judgment 'All bodies are heavy', the predicate 'heaviness' is not inherent in the concept of the subject, that is, 'bodies', and the predicate is something quite different from anything in the mere concept of body in general.

Kant also declares that, we do not find an analytic judgment in the empirical world, because in constructing an analytic judgment, we do not go outside our concept, we do not appeal to the testimony of our experience. At the same time, synthetic judgments are found only in experience, because the predicate of the concept is found only in experience.

According to Kant, there is another distinctive feature of the analytic and the synthetic judgments. In his opinion, analytic judgments do not add anything new to our knowledge. Whereas, synthetic judgments add to the concept of the subject some new information. Moreover, the analytic judgments are universal, certain and necessary, because they are not derived from experience,whereas, synthetic judgments are contingent and probable, because they are derived from experience.

13.4 A PRIORI AND A POSTERIORI JUDGMENTS

Kant holds that, like analytic judgments, a priori knowledge is also universal, certain and necessary, and is inseparable from one another. Necessity and strict universality are thus sure criteria of a priori knowledge, and are inseparable from one another. Kant defines an a priori knowledge as knowledge that is independent of experience and even of all impressions of the senses. And an aposteriori knowledge is that knowledge which has its source in experience.

Kant remarks that an analytic judgment must be apriori. However, an apriori judgment may not be analytic. It may be synthetic also. Apriori and analytic judgments are similar for Kant, because they are not derived from experience. But they have also minute difference. Their difference lies in the fact that, while in the a priori judgment, the connection between the subject and the predicate is conceived in terms of 'containedness' and 'identity', but in the analytic judgment, it is not so conceived. He explains an apriori judgment with the example of the category of cause and effect. Everything which happens has its cause. This statement is apriori, as Kant holds, in the sense that the concept of cause is implied in the concept of an effect and it is synthetic because without experience, one cannot connect cause and effect.

13.5 SYNTHETIC APRIORI KNOWLEDGE

The synthetic apriori knowledge of Kant contains both the rationalistic and the empirical aspects of knowledge. Kant here criticizes both Leibniz and Locke, for accepting one aspect of knowledge and ignoring another. Kant argues that without experience no knowledge is possible, because all knowledge begins from experience. However, knowledge is not strictly limited to experience only. It confines to reason also. Kant here opposes David Hume who considers experience to be the only source of knowledge. Kant maintaining his own position says that all our knowledge starts with the senses, proceeds from there to understanding, and ends with reason,

beyond which there is no higher faculty to be found in us for elaborating the matter of intuition and bringing it under the highest unity of thought. The synthetic a priori knowledge of Kant requires for its cognition a priori forms of intuition, synthesis of imagination, concepts and transcendental unity of apperception. In Unit no 13th and 14th, we have discussed in detail sensibility and understanding, i.e., forms of sensibility and the categories.

Kant asserts that mathematics and natural science (physics) contain a priori synthetic judgments as principles because, pure mathematics and natural science are nothing more than principles of possible experience, and can never be related to things in themselves, but only to appearances as objects of experience. He however, argues that metaphysics also contains synthetic a priori knowledge. The Critique claims that the synthetic principles of metaphysics can be justified only in so far as they are conditions for the possibility of experience. Such principles for example, "Every event has a cause", "Substance persists and is always preserved through change" are supposed to explain and guarantee the possibility of experience in general, so they precede it and can be known apriori. But at the same time, the appeal to possible experience is a source of information that provides a "third thing" in terms of which we can justifiably predicate one concept of a second, even when they lack any containment relation. As a result, though, the legitimate domain of metaphysics is sharply limited, its principles have no validity beyond the bounds of possible experience.

Kant argues that we can have immanent metaphysical knowledge of synthetic a priori principles that structure all possible human experience, because they are grounded in our pure forms of intuition (space and time) and the pure concepts of our understanding (the categories). But Kant's argument for this immanent metaphysics rests on his claim that human knowledge can result only from applying concepts to intuitions, or more precisely to schemata mediating the application of concepts to appearances. This key claim implies that transcendent metaphysical knowledge-knowledge of objects that transcend the boundaries of possible human

experience-is impossible for us, since it will involve deploying concepts independently of intuitions or schemata. In fact, this is what Kant wants to establish in the Transcendental Analytic, the possibility of synthetic a priori knowledge in the phenomenal domain leaving aside the unknown domain of things as they are in themselves.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q1. Who is the author of the book entitled, "Critique of Pure Reason'?

Q2. What are the two rationalist metaphysics that are legitimate and ievitable topic of human concern?

Q3. What is apriori knowledge?

Q4. What is aposteriori knowledge?

Q5. According to Kant whether an analytic judgement is apriori or aposteriori.



13.7 LET US SUM UP

- Immanuel Kant wants to establish the sources, extent, and limits of synthetic a priori knowledge, with a view to ascertaining the prospects for metaphysics as a scientific enterprise.

- Kant's firm conviction regarding possession of synthetic a priori knowledge in the fields of mathematics, physics and metaphysics provides the backdrop for the Critique's claim to explain how such knowledge is possible.

- Kant remarks that the analytic judgment on the one hand is that, in which the connection of the predicate with the subject is thought through identity. The synthetic judgment, on the other hand, is that, in which this connection is thought without identity.

- We do not find an analytic judgment in the empirical world, because in constructing an analytic judgment, we do not go outside our concept, we do not appeal to the testimony of our experience. At the same time, synthetic judgments are found only in experience, because the predicate of the concept is found only in experience.

- Like analytic judgments, a priori knowledge is also universal, certain and necessary, and is inseparable from one another. Necessity and strict universality are thus sure criteria of a priori knowledge, and are inseparable from one another.

- An a posteriori knowledge is that knowledge which has its source in experience.

- The synthetic a priori knowledge of Kant contains both the rationalistic and the empirical aspects of knowledge.

- According to Kant, all our knowledge starts with the senses, proceeds from there to understanding, and ends with reason, beyond which there is no higher faculty to be found in us for elaborating the matter of intuition and bringing it under the highest unity of thought.

- The synthetic a priori knowledge of Kant requires for its cognition a priori forms of intuition, synthesis of imagination, concepts and transcendental unity of apperception.



12.8 FURTHER READING:

1) Burnham, Douglas and Young Harvey Kant's Critique of Pure Reason, (Edinburg: Edinburg University Press, 2007).

2) Cassirer, H.W., Kant's First Critique: An Appraisal of the Permanent Significance of Kant's Critique of Pure Reason, (London: George Allen & Unwin Limited, 1961).

3) Ewing, A.C., A Short Commentary to Kant's Critique of Pure Reason, (London: The University of Chicago Press, 1970).

4) Falkenberg, Richard, History of Modern Philosophy, (Calcutta: Progressive Publishers, 1977).

5) Kant, Immanuel Critique of Pure Reason, translated by N.K. Smith, (London: Macmillan, 1973).

6) _____, Prolegomena to Any Future Metaphysics: That will be Able to Come Forward

7) as Science, translated and edited by Gary Hatfield, (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2004).

8) O'Connor, D.J., (ed.),A Critical History of Western Philosophy, (New York: The Free Press, 1964).

9) Scruton,Roger Kant, (London: Oxford University Press, 1982).

10) Wilkerson,T.E. Kant's Critique of Pure Reason: A Commentary for Students,(London: Clarendon Press, 1976).

11) Wood,Allen Kant, (London: Blackwell Publishing, 2005).

13.9 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS:

Ans. to Q No. 1: Kant.

Ans. to Q No. 2: God, human immartality and human freedom.

Ans. to Q No. 3: According to Kant apriori knowledge is knowledge, that is independent of experience and even all impressions of the senses.

Ans. to Q No. 4: An aporteriori knowledge is that knowledge which has its source in experience.

Ans. to Q No. 5: Apriori.

13.10 MODEL QUESTIONS:

Q1. Distinguish between analytic and synthetic judgments.

Q2. How is an a priori judgment differ from an a posteriori judgment? Discuss

Q3. How is synthetic a priori knowledge possible? Explain in detail.

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