

Kant's theory of concept formation and the role of mind

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The emphasis of the rationalists on concept formation is traceable to the unfolding of the mind's innate powers in producing ideas within itself. The empiricists, on the other hand, beginning with the data of experience as the source of all our legitimate concepts and truths of the world, conceive the mind as contributing nothing to the knowing process – a position that had severe negative consequences for human knowledge. Immanuel Kant's response to his predecessors was to formulate a new theory of concept formation in which he conceives the crucial role our minds play in the determination of the forms of our knowledge. The key to the progression in this paper which shows its most important contribution is not only the attempt to analyze how Kant "sets out to discover and justify the principles underlying objective judgements" but also his arguments that the human mind brings 'something' transcendental to the object it experiences. This view, which is revolutionary, represents a turning point in Western philosophy and indicates the need for new conceptual schemes of the mind that became manifest at the beginning of the 19th century. This is tremendously evident in Heidegger's philosophy and in mentalistic psychology from Freud to Chomsky.

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Introduction

From the very beginning of the philosophical enterprise, the problem of the human mind, as a conscious entity seen as a relation between the object and the subject of knowledge, its function and extent in acquiring and processing information about the world and the general grounds for its reliability, has been at the forefront of the debate on cognition. A further result of this perspective was that with the modern period, the influence of the Renaissance and the advances in science, led to the emergence of rationalism – the dominant epistemological school that championed theoretical and practical assumptions that human beings can attain objective knowledge of reality by the use of reason. For them, human reason is an instrument for considering what is fixed and certain in nature. Thus, when a rationalist believes that one has a clear and distinct idea or understanding of something, it is usually taken for granted that the object in the subjective mind exists outside of consciousness. Starting with René Descartes (1595-1650), Baruch Spinoza (1632-1677) and Gottfried Leibniz (1646-1617), these advocates of rationalism have insisted that knowledge begins from the subjective self (Connor 1964: 226-269). They are all united in their support of *a priori*/necessary/analytic truths and therefore uphold the belief that the mind plays a productive role in the knowing process. Here, the emphasis is on the innate powers or capacities of the human mind to unravel independent truths by generating or producing ideas within itself intuitively and deductively without necessarily experiencing them.

The second epistemological camp – the British empiricists John Locke (1632-1704), George Berkeley (1685-1753) and David Hume (1711-1776) reacted against the alleged certainties of the rationalists' arguments about *a priori* knowledge. By arguing that the deductive rationalists' truths opened the door to metaphysical speculation without substantial evidence, these proponents of the British empiricist tradition deny the possibility of innate ideas and emphasize the belief in *a posteriori*/contingent/synthetic truths, since our knowledge of the world comes from the objects of experience (Dunn 1984:61-216). Thus, for Locke and other empiricists, the mind is a blank slate; a passive receptor that is incapable of generating its own ideas internally except as experience affords it. By the close of the 17th century, rationalism, culminated in Leibnizian philosophy, led to dogmatism in being unable to do justice to the richness and open-ended nature of experience due to its assumption that knowledge proceeds through innate ideas/faculties, in a prioristic fashion whereby the mind never seems capable of reaching outside itself. This is evident in the complete, absolute, unconditional and apodictic mode by which these philosophers had proved the structure of reality while empiricism, in an attempt to construct an edifice of knowledge based only on experience, lost itself in Hume's scepticism which destroyed the very possibility of objective scientific knowledge.

Kant and the critical philosophy

It is in response to the dissatisfaction with the dogmatic rationalists' metaphysics aided by the empiricists' scepticism that Kant developed his critical philosophy. In the preface to the *Critique of Pure Reason* (1781), Kant asked, "What and how much can the understanding and reason know apart from all experience?" (trans. Kemp-Smith 1929: 12). His argument is

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that although our knowledge cannot go beyond the limits of our experience, yet it is of an *a priori* nature that is not derived from experience. At this point, Kant gives the distinction, between the rationalists “analytic” *a priori* judgements (an instance of logical truth) and empiricists “synthetic” *a posteriori* judgements (established by experience) a fresh twist by asserting that there are judgements that are both synthetic and *a priori*; thus cutting across the usual epistemological classifications. In this, Kant conceives his main problem as “How are synthetic *a priori* judgements possible?” (1929:55). That is, how is it that we can know reality *a priori*? Or what are the necessary conditions of a possible experience? This is the alternative Kant faced when he asked himself whether it is possible to go beyond analytic *a priori* judgements on one hand and synthetic *a posteriori* judgements on the other. Kant shows that in mathematics, natural science (physics) and metaphysics, we do make judgments precisely of this character (1929:52-55). By these illustrations, Kant’s answer is that those of mathematics and natural science (physics) are possible but that those of metaphysics are not. His main reason in comparing the status of mathematics and natural science with that of metaphysics was twofold:

- (i) To show that the mathematical and scientific systems as justified fields of epistemology are defensible against Hume’s sceptical attacks, and
- (ii) To expose the apparent pretensions, contradiction and illusions of the traditional rationalists’ metaphysics and to substitute for them a science of the limits of human knowledge.

Against this background, Kant’s argument is that experience must be of objects that conform to the general truths of mathematics and physics and not of metaphysics. This is because, for metaphysics, there are no possible objects given in sense experience which correspond to its transcendental ideas. In this way, Kant was convinced that to investigate the status of the theorems of mathematics and the most general truths of physics is to investigate the necessary conditions of a possible experience. His formulation of this general problem no doubt influences his reversal of the dominant epistemological drive for a theory of mind and consciousness by dividing the fundamental doctrines of the *Critique* into three main sections. The first, the ‘Transcendental Aesthetic’ (concerning the status of mathematics), deals with space and time as *a priori* elements or forms of sensibility involved in sensory knowledge. The second, its corresponding transcendental ‘twin’ – the ‘Transcendental Logic’ sub-divided into the ‘Transcendental Analytic’ (the understanding – which concerns the status of natural science), deals with the *a priori* or pure concepts otherwise known as the categories of our understanding and its contributions to experience; while the third – the ‘Transcendental Dialectic’ (reason), dealing with the status of metaphysics as criteria of knowledge, tries to show the illegitimate endeavor reason adopts if it attempts to draw conclusions about things in themselves which are outside the realms of possible experience.

Kant’s theory of concept formation and the role of mind

For Kant, the two areas of the mind whose combined operations are necessary for our knowledge of objects are ‘sensibility’ and ‘understanding’. Sensibility is the power to know objects by means of the senses while understanding is the capacity that the mind has to organize the raw matter of sensation into cognitive states of knowing. What is known is a phenomenal object and this happens as a result of the ability of sensibility or “sensuous intuition” to represent to us, in space and time, a field of appearances that are then apprehended. This means that intuition as “a state of immediate awareness” occurs when the human subject is in contact with the object of knowledge. According to Kant:

The capacity (receptivity) for receiving representations through the mode in which we are affected by objects is entitled sensibility. Objects are given to us by means of sensibility and it alone yields intuition; they are thought through the understanding and from the understanding arise concepts (1929:65).

In his formulation: “without sensibility no objects would be given to us, without understanding no objects would be thought” (1929:93). Sensibility and understanding therefore cooperate in constituting our experience of objects external to us in the *a priori* sense, intuition of space and time such that each experience has content in that it is of something that has a necessary spatial and/or temporal form. This is the simple apprehension (pure sensibility) of a particular sensation operating (without concepts) that can be spoken in Kant’s system. However, at this first level of perception, he holds that we cannot strictly speaking know our experience of particular sensible objects. In his view, this alone does not amount to knowledge or judgements until we apply concepts. In this second level, our experience or intuitions have to be brought under concepts. Here, Kant argues that the understanding makes use of certain *a priori* concepts which he classifies under the general headings of Quantity (unity, plurality, totality), Relation (substance, causality, reciprocity) and Modality (possibility, existence and necessity) to organize particular sensations into unified objects of experience.

The next question which arises for Kant is the question of relating the sensible to the conceptual. He claims that the application of the categories to experience is legitimate. “The explanation of the manner in which concepts can thus relate *a priori* to objects I entitle their transcendental deduction” (1929:121). In this, Kant tries to justify “how subjective condition of thought can have objective validity” (1929:124). *A priori* concepts according to him are justified if we can satisfy the transcendental condition that only through them can an object be thought. “This will be a sufficient deduction

of them ... (that) will justify their objective validity" (1929:130). Kant contends that for all *a priori* concepts to be valid, they must of necessity refer to perception or the intuited. His argument for this position runs roughly as follows:

(i) To have experience of objects and be able to make objective empirical judgements about objects, we must have the application of the categories. This is so because our notion of "object" is bound up with the category of substance and cannot be merely abstracted from experience. We could not even obtain most of our empirical concepts without the notion of unity, or a subject to which our properties applied. For instance, our empirical concept of "table" involves ascribing certain properties – having legs, being solid, having a flat top, etc. to one thing, of which we have various sensations in time. Without the category of unity, however, we would not even be able to refer several different sensations to one object. Thus, the application of the categories is a necessary condition for having experience of objects.

(ii) But it is an obvious fact that we do have experiences and also make objective judgements about these experiences.

(iii) Thus, the categories must apply to experience, for if they do not, we would not have any experience of objects, as we obviously do.

The above argument purports to show that the categories must apply to experience. The question remains "How do they apply, since the concepts are *a priori* and the perceptions empirical?" (1929:173). Kant thought there was no problem in seeing that one could subsume empirical instances of concepts under empirical concepts and *a priori* instances of concepts under *a priori* concepts, since the object subsumed and the concept were "homogeneous," for example both *a priori* or both empirical. Since the categories and what is subsumed under them are heterogeneous, Kant thought it necessary to use time as the connecting medium to explain the applicability of the concepts to the sensible instances. Time, being *a priori*, in the sense that it can be apprehended (intuited) before all experience, and being akin to empirical sensation in that it orders all sensations, is the way Kant explains the applicability of the categories. But if time is the factor that allows the categories to be applied to objects, then objects (if there are any) which are not in time cannot be the subject of objectively valid judgements. For these latter necessitate the application of the categories. For any knowledge to be possible therefore, according to Kant, one needs on one hand a combination of empirical intuitions (a 'manifold' of sensations received in the two fundamental forms of human sensibility, namely space and time, for apprehending particular appearances at t_1); and on the other hand, the application of the relevant categories (pure concepts of the understanding or rules which classify the particular experiences under general headings to what is given in intuition so that I can say that the application at t_1 is the appearance of a phenomenal object "table". In Kant's view "neither concepts without an intuition in some way corresponding to them, nor intuition without concepts, can yield knowledge" (1929:92). Hence, his often quoted saying: "Thoughts without contents are empty; intuitions without concepts are blind" (1929:93).

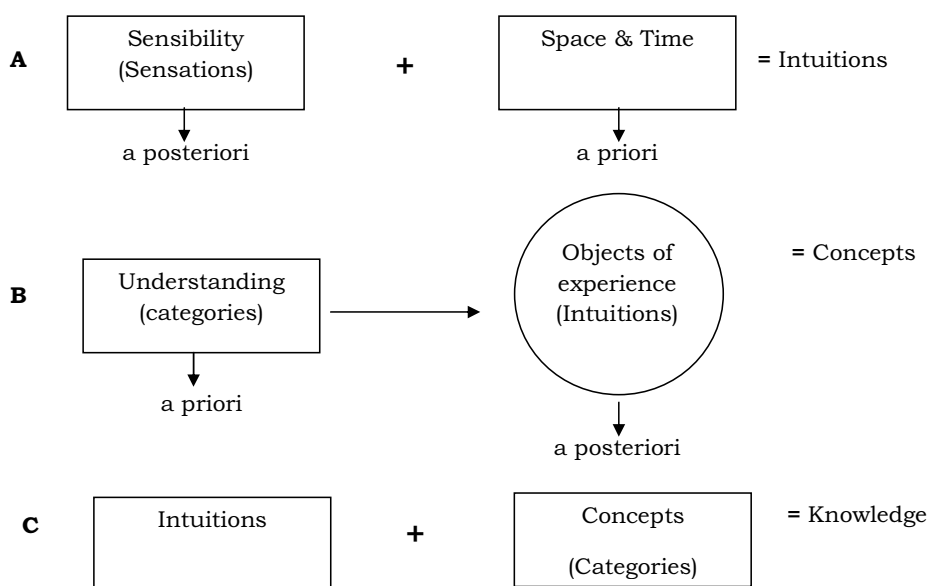


Figure 1

This diagram shows the cognitive activities of the human mind as active. Here, "objective empirical judgements" of the external world are possible when we correctly relate a concept to an object; that is when we give the concept a denotation as illustrated above.

Implications of Kant's philosophy

One major implication of Kant's philosophical postulation is the separation of thinking from sensing and reasoning. He tells us that thinking is a mental activity that takes place in very refined (fixed) conditions. Sensations, or experience, is for Kant indispensable to knowledge; but sensations are mute. They have no mental content. If we had only sensations, we would literally know nothing. Sensations, according to Kant, provide the raw materials for knowledge, but concepts are formed only by virtue of the categories of our intellect. He calls the categories a set conceptual framework that constitutes our mental/knowing activity. For Kant, we can only think in terms of or through these categories, keeping in mind that they are not in the object but in the subject. It is the categories of our minds that give form to the raw materials of sensation. If by hypothesis we had no experience, we would never be aware of the categories of our minds. In experience, we apply and become aware of these categories.

Another possible implication of Kant's argument is that when space and time and the *a priori* forms, categories (cognitive structures) of our understanding are applied to objects beyond experience, they are the ideas of pure reason. Objects outside experience are things in themselves; and thoughts about objects outside possible experience are thoughts about *noumenal* objects or objects which are not objects of sensuous intuition. Kant does not deny that there are things which exist independently of our experiences of them. What he denies rather is that we cannot know anything about these independent things, which he calls "things in themselves" (phenomena). This means all our knowledge constitutes representations of reality, whose characteristics as appearances depend on the constitutions of our minds; yet they provide the basis for objective knowledge because the categories are universal, necessary conditions of our knowing process. Thus, with Kant, Hume's scepticism about the possibility of certain knowledge was completely abandoned.

Kant calls reason a mental activity when it applies itself to concepts that are beyond experience. This, according to him, gives rise to all the problems of metaphysics and ultimately leads us to the *antinomies* that are opposite, contradictory propositions for which we can present equal valid claims (for example "time is finite", "time is infinite"). Kant's major work in epistemology is an attempt to show that we must limit ourselves in applying our knowledge to the sphere of our experience. (His *Critique of Pure Reason* is reason detached from experience). In fact, it is Kant's intent both to show that objective knowledge is possible and at the same time the limits of our knowledge, the functions it can perform and the areas to which it can be applied.

Kant and his predecessors: the Copernican turn

For Kant's predecessors, notably the rationalists, the human mind is said to be a 'conscious machine' in having the capacity to produce or generate ideas within its own operations. Consequently, knowledge consists in the raw materials or ideas that are innate in the mind corresponding to the object of thought outside of consciousness. With Descartes, each thought is a relation between the subject and the object of thought whereby the subject is affected. Here, we have the discovery of the crucial role of subjectivity in the creation of objectivity. Through the subject, we create the basic object (the self) out of which the question of certainty becomes evident. Descartes thus opens three centuries of investigation of subjectivity and analysis of the knowing process. In thinking, the Cartesian subject activates itself; it is a process of self-causation in which the subject becomes divine in the thought process. The self in Descartes is always an element of the thought process in some instances of thinking (for example in dreams), we forget ourselves. But for there to be a thought, there must be a self that thinks the thought, a distance between the subject and the object of thinking. Hence, the first part of the *Meditations* is devoted to making the self completely detached from the object of thinking. This is accomplished through the process of doubt, which is at the same time a method of self construction. Doubt shows that we are different from what we think and in this process, we suspend (the belief in) the object of thought or, using Husserlian terminology, we "bracket it". This implies a relational conception of thinking. But at the peak of the distancing process, we have a reversal. Here, we discover that the subject and the object of thinking become identical in so far as the self takes itself as the object of thought. From this, the mind derives the possibility of certain knowledge, the possibility of overcoming the gap or distance between subject and object.

False thinking for Descartes is a fundamental problem of action. The world requires action and action requires belief, even though we do not have the proper condition for achieving true belief in questions of experience. Thus, in action, we are forced to leap beyond what we can assert with certainty. If we stayed within the 'monad' of the self, we would not have false thoughts because there would be no gap between the thinker and the thing thought. But action takes us out of ourselves. It forces us to make decisions whose variables are not dependent on us. We are weak in making these decisions, so much that we are moved by our passions. The self has endless capacities; out of time but in action we have to operate in a temporal, finite context. For example, our actions in the socio-political sphere embedded in time which put unnatural constraints on our thinking is the cause of a distortion in the thought process. (This indicates the influence

of Descartes on Sartre. In Sartre as well, the moment of action is the moment of fixation or reduction of the infinitely transcending nature of consciousness.)

When the Cartesian subject is involved in the act of thinking, the self as the foundation stone of knowledge and certainty is seen as an epistemic circle, a prison from which it is impossible to escape. From now on, the question of the object of thought (where do they come from?) becomes all important. The empiricists represent such an attempt to continuously search for ways to get out of the circle of the self. For the question now is: Are the objects of thought created by us? Do we ever in our knowledge reach reality? It is in this context that the problematic of sensation becomes crucial. Sensations (with the empiricists) seem to offer a promise, the promise to be able to escape the circle of subjectivity. In sensation, something is imposed on us from the outside. Their inexhaustibility is unparallel to the inexhaustibility of the self. They seem to produce infinity within finitude. Unlike in Descartes, we are trapped within the confines of the self, finite and limited to our innate ideas and subjectivity. But with sensations, we are capable of moving out of the self to new possibilities of experience, new images and new insights. With sensations, the empiricists seem to be able to recapture the world such that, from Locke to Berkeley and to Hume, the mind of the knower is purely a passive mechanism that sorts out, separates and combines the raw data or simple ideas of sensations received from the outside world. This means that the mind has no ideas of its own produced internally except that which it generates from without to form complex ideas of reflection within.

Kant challenges the rationalists' and empiricists' assumptions; especially the assumptions of the subject (self) – object (world) polarity. Instead of deriving meaning from objects, Kant insists that we impose meaning on them. For him, the object of knowledge now revolves around the knower, rather than the knower around the object. This is often called Kant's Copernican Revolution. He likened his epistemological turn in philosophy to the Copernican revolution in astronomy. It was believed before Nicholas Copernicus that the earth was the centre of the universe and every planet revolved round it. But since Copernicus we know that the sun (and not the earth) is the centre of the universe with the earth and other planets revolving round it. In the same way, prior to Kant, the empiricists argued that ideas of sensation were merely copies of objects perceived by the senses (minds conform to objects). Kant's revolution changed the dominant epistemological views that we know objects because the mind contributes important organizing principles which make our knowledge of objects possible. (Here, objects conform to the operations of the mind). The emphasis has shifted from the mind being productive as with the rationalists, being passive as with the empiricists, to the active role of the mind with Kant in shaping the world that can be known. Thus, for Kant the mind shapes and gives form to our cognition. What we see is the product of a mental construction. Our knowing process is an active, creative process even though the conditions of our creation (space, time and the twelve categories of our intellect) are inescapable givens for us. Kant also differs from Descartes. Like Descartes, he attributes a crucial importance to the subject of knowledge but he recognizes that this subject is not an unconditional entity. That is, when applied to knowledge, subjectivity has particular forms, conditions which delimit how and what is possible for us to know. In this way, our knowledge of the world "is ... no longer an independent one, its creation is shared in by mind and the laws immanent in mind" (Stegmuller 1967:265).

Kant's influences on subsequent philosophers

Kant's discovery of the crucial role our mental structure or categories play in the determination of the forms of our knowledge caused a virtual "boom" of investigations concerning the mind and its contents. By the turn of the 19th century, we have the development of cognitive psychology and with Edmund Husserl the development of phenomenology whose specific task is to study the structures and objects of consciousness. On the first level, Husserl's phenomenology provides Martin Heidegger with a source of modern existential ontology that reflects on how Kant can be interpreted as 'going beyond' the subject-object dichotomy, particularly with his formula of "Being-in-the-world". In his classic work *Being and Time* (1927), Heidegger accuses earlier metaphysicians for concentrating on just one aspect of being, thus treating 'Being as beings'; instead of going to the 'Being itself'. In his submission, this wrong conception of Being is due to the inadequate formulation of the Being question (what is Being?). This is seen in Aristotle who had reduced Beings to substances as independent entities. According to Heidegger, Aristotle fails to recognize that Being is a presence and not an existent that stands to be analyzed. He criticizes Aristotle for dealing with the 'what' rather than the 'how' of being. By so doing, he blocked access to the question of 'Being of beings' and directed all subsequent thoughts in metaphysics to the consideration of 'Being as beings'. Heidegger rejects this particularization of Being which has since become a classical identification of Being. In this, he says "... the great philosophers from Aristotle to the present day have been led astray by the nature of Being" (Quoted by Collins 1952:159).

Similarly in Descartes, Heidegger argues the fact that Cartesian dualism or substances – the 'res extensa' – has a reality (a subject or mind) over and against the 'res cognitans' (an object or body) which is the very ground for the suppression

and neglect of the Being question. He also sees Kant's critique of pure reason as offering the same task which his fundamental ontology sets out to achieve. Heidegger acknowledges Kant as "... the first and only person who has gone any stretch of the way towards investigating the dimension of temporality or has even let himself be drawn hither by the coercion of phenomena themselves" (Heidegger 1962:45). He argues that Kant would have succeeded in reaching the domain of Being but never did because of the stronghold of tradition that never allowed him into the analysis of the problematic of temporality which is the clue to the understanding of the meaning of Being. Instead, Heidegger is of the opinion that Kant was dogmatic to Descartes' conception of the ego (self) as the fundamental. In addition, Heidegger sees Kant's denial of 'noumenon' (the thing in itself) as unknowable as a further confirmation of his neglect of the meaning of Being and thus its subsequent forgetfulness.

Kant's failure ... was the result of his limiting his notion of man to man's metaphysical nature. He should have gone further and considered the nature of man not merely as an observer or even as a constitutor of his own world but as a member of that world, as a complete being in time with history and a historical duty (Warnock 1970:44).

From the above criticisms, Heidegger says that traditional philosophers remain simply on the ontic level (Being as being) instead of getting to the ontological level (Being as such). In reformulating the Being question as "why should there be anything at all rather than nothing?" Heidegger provides an explanation of how (in what sense) Being is to be understood and conceptually grasped. Consequently, he begins with an interpretation (hermeneutics) of human existence. 'Dasein' meaning 'Being there' or 'Being – here' is the German word Heidegger uses to denote human consciousness in its ontological relationship with Being. Having seen that Dasein is the only Being through whom Beings are revealed, manifested and understood, Heidegger goes further to call the method of this manifestation phenomenological. According to him, "only in phenomenology is ontology possible" (Heidegger 1962:60). Phenomenology therefore becomes the method for the study of ontology. In Heidegger's view, Being is never without Being. It cannot be on its own. It must be in Being. Thus, "Being cannot be understood apart from man and man cannot be understood apart from Being. Being is man's horizon and man is the shepherd of Being" (Heidegger 1962:24). For this, Sartre is wrong if he thinks he has Heidegger's support that we are in a situation where man is alone in the world. For Heidegger, on the contrary, we are in a situation where it is only Being that exists. This is how 'Dasein' is now seen as the existence of man, taking up one's own possibilities, dread (anxiety), fear and a Being-towards-death which is an indication of his temporality and infinitude as the inevitability of his limited existence. Temporality is the ontological basis of human existence. It serves as the primordial unity of the structure of care-existentiality, facticity and fallenness. As Heidegger says "the primordial unity of the structure of care lies in temporality" (Heidegger 1962:375). This is why his concept of Dasein is historical – a Being whose existence moves from the past, the present into the future. With this fundamental ontology, Heidegger resolves 'the problem of the subject and object dichotomy in which the majority of modern philosophers tend to separate the knowing subject (the conscious self) from the known object (the world). Such perception according to Heidegger gives us a one-sided and inappropriate account of our primary relationship to the world because it sees man and the world as objectively distinct entities. Heidegger's concept of 'Being-in-the world' meaning 'dwelling-upon', 'with-Being', 'where one finds or understands one-self' indicate that man (Dasein) cannot be separated from the world. They are one, encompassing features of our experience.

On the second level, Kant's influence on the development of cognitive psychology, however, led to a reaction against the prevailing "mentalism" in psychology and philosophy. This reaction came from different sources and took different forms (though with common denominators) but in each case, it rejected some of the main assumptions of the mentalist position, which include:

- (i) That we do have a privileged access to self-knowledge and that our mind and its contents is what we know with all amount of certainty through introspection as advocated by Descartes ('Meditation' 1966:153ff) and Bertrand Russell (1967: 64 -68).
- (ii) That our mental, psychic or inner life is necessarily conscious. Sigmund Freud (1949:105) Noam Chomsky (1962:58ff) and
- (iii) That there is such a thing as a mental sphere (a mind (self), mental subject, objects, contents, events, etc.) identifiable and distinguished from the physical sphere as seen in Behaviourism and Physicalism (James 1981:21ff).

It is a central tenet of Kant's predecessors, notably the Cartesian philosophy, that the most certain knowledge that our minds have is the knowledge of ourselves such that self-knowledge through introspection has for Descartes an epistemic superiority with respect to our knowledge of the external world. He claims that though we may be deceived about the external world, we cannot be deceived about our minds, because in the mental activity both the subject and object are the same. In his words, "nothing is easier for me than to know my mind" (Descartes 1966:153). This view of course pre-

supposes that our mental activity is conscious – an assumption that Descartes shared with the empiricists. Locke for example argues that:

Thinking, perceiving are essentially conscious processes which means they cannot be said to occur unless the person to whom they are ascribed knows that they occur (1973:216).

According to this view, the human mind is equated with consciousness in such a way that it is impossible to have feelings, desires or belief without knowing that we have them. Hence, introspection or inner intuition gives a knowledge of our mental life and this knowledge can be certain, infallible and omniscient because our mental contents constitute our minds.

This position was put into crisis by Freud's work whose main theme is that the most important part of our psychic or inner life is unconscious. Freud claims that (i) not only our mental states are not necessarily conscious but (ii) our consciousness has a dissimulating function, that is, it actively prevents, blocks, our feelings, wishes, desires, wants from becoming conscious. The main part of our mental life goes on without conscious awareness on our side; only a selected part of our inner life becomes conscious. The 'unconscious' is for Freud the "true psychic reality" and it is unknown to us (Freud 1949:120). Thus, not only do we not know ourselves better than we know the external world. Just the opposite is the case. It is more likely that we are deceived about ourselves (what we want, what we feel, etc.) than about the external world.

Freud argues that our inner reality can only be known in a limited, incomplete way insofar as consciousness has a censorship function with respect to it. That is we select what we become conscious of, we remove, repress the experience of certain feelings or wishes. Here, the Cartesian position in Freud is turned upside down. Far from having a privileged access to our mental and psychic life, we systematically dissimulate, falsify and distort the knowledge of our mental life. We distort our motives and desires more than we distort our perceptions of the external world. Thus, our mental life needs to be interpreted; we can know it by inference (from our behavior for example), but not immediately. We can reconstruct it from certain clues that we provide in our speech (for example, slips, errors) and in our actions. Freud says that often our conscious ideas of what we want point to wishes that are exactly the opposite of what we believe to be the case (for example, we may say and believe that we love a particular person or when in actual fact we hate the individual). Freud contends that our consciousness is a set of regulatory process (they regulate or select what becomes conscious or not) and only provide a clue to the actual psychic reality that lies underneath (Freud 1949:132). Repression, for Freud is a key function of consciousness. Through repression we block certain mental states, dispositions, contents from becoming conscious; we ensure that consciousness and our psychic life are disjunctive. For example, we may be angry without being aware that we are angry, without consciously experiencing anger.

Following Freud, modern psychologists insist that we separate our mental and psychic states from our consciousness. They claim that the split between the psychic and consciousness may be due to (i) defense mechanisms (for example, we remove unpleasant and painful knowledge about ourselves) or (ii) failure to integrate our knowledge and our experiences (iii) failure to interpret correctly what we experience. The meaning of our experiences has to be expressed or translated into linguistic terms, into propositions, and we may perform a mistaken translation or interpretation. According to modern psychology, only ideally do we know ourselves. For them, self-knowledge is not a given, but an achievement and indeed our behaviour may reveal more of what we think, feel, want and what we tell ourselves in our consciousness. A similar attack on the Cartesian equation of mind and consciousness passing through the Kantian model in which the mind as an entity co-ordinates and apprehend objects in a single stream of experience came from linguists such as Chomsky, whose work in the 1960s claims that our mental life as reflected in language is governed by a "deep structure" inaccessible to consciousness that represents the central feature of the mind.

Conclusion

From the broad outlines of our discussion, we can see that Kant's theory of concept formation resulted from the dissatisfaction with his predecessors' consideration of our minds' interactions with the world. However, his formulation cannot wholly lay claims to have produced a successful edifice. Still, the novel contribution of his work to the theory of mind and consciousness was this proposal of a radical solution where he compromised between the strict empiricist view which claims that all concepts are abstracted from experience and the strict rationalist view which held that all concepts are *a priori* notions in the mind. As we have seen, Kant treats the categories as do the rationalists, and empirical concepts as do the empiricists. In citing specific example in line with his argument, we demonstrated that, for us to make objective judgements about our experience, two complementary conditions are necessary. First 'something' must be given to us from the object of experience (that is we must have an intuition from the outside) and second this 'something' can be known by us only through the categories of our intellect. This means that we must attribute a definite concept to it (by bringing the intuition under a concept). In Kant's view, we know by imposing our mental categories which are universal, necessary conditions on experience. It is the knowledge of this sort that he called "objectively valid" judgements. On this

basis, Kant contrary to his predecessors, was convinced that 'mind' actively synthesized 'experience' in the knowing process; thereby bridging the gap between the subject and object. This trend no doubt witnessed Heidegger's radical break with this philosophical tradition, the impact on the development of cognitive psychology and the subsequent reactions against its philosophy.

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