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A STUDY OF THE TRENDS IN WESTERN THOUGHTS WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO PHILOSOPHY OF IMMANUEL KANT

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ABSTRACT

Western thoughts are scientific approach to way of life. It deals about the various Ideas in Human and Mind. Immanuel Kant is the most remarkable person in Western philosophy. His thoughts are related to transcendental philosophy, Idealism, Knowledge, and Experience. Experience is by no means the only field to which our understanding can be confined. Experience tells us what is, but not that it must be necessarily what it is and not otherwise if therefore never gives us really general truths; and our reason which is particularly anxious for the class of knowledge, is roused by it rather than satisfied. His thoughts are role plays in the development of knowledge. Kant attempted a compromise between Idealism and Empiricism. His theory is called transcendental idealism.

KEYWORDS: Idealism, Relation between



Knowledge and Experience, Empiricism, Moral law, Transcendental philosophy.

INTRODUCTION:

Idealism which contents that knowledge is innate –i.e. arising in our mind independently of experience, and, Empiricism which refutes the idealist theory and maintains that knowledge arises only from our experiences of the external world - especially through the sense organs. In particular most important philosopher Hume had stated “we know the mind, only as we know the matter: by perception though it is in this case internal. Never do we perceive any such entity as the Mind; we perceive merely separate ideas,

memories, feelings etc. Thus Berkely had destroyed the matter and Hume the mind. A wit advised the abandonment of the controversy, saying “No matter never Mind”. “The epistemological tradition –the enquiry into nature, sources and validity of knowledge had ceased to be support to religion, the word with which Bishop Berkely had slain the dragon of materialism, mind and immortal soul; and in the turmoil science itself suffered severe injury. No wonder that when Immanuel Kant, in 1775 read a German translation of the work of David Hume, he was shocked by these results ,and was roused from the “Dogmatic slumber” in which he had assumed without question the

essentials of religion and the basis of science and faith to be surrendered to the sceptic? What could be done to save them?” Kant attempted a compromise between Idealism and Empiricism. In his view both are important and both of them play a role in the development of knowledge. His theory is called transcendental idealism. We shall explain this a little later. Many critics thought that Kant has the erred in favour of the idealists-while a few maintain that while attempting to depreciate the role of empiricism he only succeed in upholding it entirely.

FOREMOST THINKER OF ENLIGHTENMENT

Kant was born on April 22, 1724 in Konigsberg, Prussia, where he spent his whole life He entered the University in 1740 as a theological student but he was attracted to Mathematics and Physics, especially the works of Sir Isaac Newton; He served as a family tutor (1746-55) until he was able to complete his degree at

the University. The controversy and compromise apart, the fact remains that Kant was the foremost thinker of enlighten and were one of the greatest philosophers of all time. His comprehensive and systematic work in the theory of knowledge, ethics aesthetics greatly influenced all subsequent philosophy, especially the various German schools of Kantianism and Idealism.

KNOWLEDGE INDEPENDENT OF EXPERIENCE

"How far we can advance independently of all experience, in a priori knowledge, is shown by the brilliant example of mathematics" Mathematical knowledge is necessary and certain; we cannot conceive of future experience violating it. We may believe that the sun will rise in the west tomorrow, or that someday, in some conceivable asbestos world, fire will not burn stick; but we cannot for the life of us believe that two times two will ever make anything else than four. Such truths are true before experience; they do not depend on experience past, present, or to come. Therefore they are absolute and necessary truths; it is inconceivable that they should ever become untrue. But whence do we get this character of absolute and necessity? Not from experience; for experience gives us nothing but separate sensations and events, which may alter sequence in the future. These truths derive their necessary character from the inherent structure of our minds from that natural and inevitable manner in which our minds must operate. For the mind of man is not passive wax upon which experience and sensation write their absolute and yet whimsical will; nor is it a mere abstract name for the series of group of mental states; It is an active organ which moulds and coordinates sensation in to ideas an organ which transforms the chaotic multiplicity of experience in to the ordered unity of thought.

TRANSCENDENTAL AESTHETICS

The effort of answer this question, to study the inherent structure of the mind, or the innate law of thought, is what Kant calls "transcendental philosophy", because it is problem of transcending sense –experience. "I call knowledge transcendental which is occupied not so much with objects, as without 'a priori' concepts of object" - with our modes of correlating our experience in to knowledge. There are two grades of stages in this process of working up the raw material of sensation into the finished product of thought. The first stage is the coordination of sensations by applying to them the forms of perception –space and time; the second stage in the coordination of the perception so developed, by applying to them the forms of conception –the categories of thought. Kant using the word esthetic in its original and etymological sense as connoting sensation or feeling, calls the study of the first of these stages 'transcendental aesthetics'.

CATEGORIES OF THOUGHT

Space and time, Kant says, are not concepts, they are terms of intuition. They are also however, a priori concepts, they are the twelve "categories", which Kant derives from the forms of syllogism.. The twelve categories are divided in to four sets of three (1) of quantity of plurality, totality today (2) of quality, reality, negation, limitation,(3) of relation; substance and accident, cause and effect, reciprocity (4) of modality; possibility, existence, necessity. These are such that they are applicable to whatever we experience, but there is no reason to suppose them applicable to things in them.

TRANSCENDENTAL DIALECTIC

Our detailed knowledge is about their appearance, there phenomena, about the sensations which we have of them. Idealism does not mean, as the man in the street thinks, that nothing exists outside the perceiving subject; but that a goodly part of every object is created by the forms of perception and understanding; we know the object as transformed into idea; what is before being transformed being so transformed we cannot know. Science, after all is native; it supposes that it is dealing with things in themselves, in their full blooded external and uncorrupted reality, philosophy is a little more sophisticated, and realize that the whole material of science consists of sensations, perceptions, rather than of things. "Kants greatest merit" says Schopenhauer, "is the distinction of the phenomenon from the thing in-itself"

ANTINOMIES OF REASONS:

Fallacies arise by applying space and time or categories to things that are not experienced. Kant calls them antinomies of reason: There are four antinomies. In the first thesis says: "The world has a beginning in time and is also

limited as regard space” The antithesis says: “The world has no beginning in time and no limits in space; it is infinite as regards both time and space”. The second antinomy proves that every composite substance both is and is not, made up of simple parts. The thesis of the third antinomy maintains that there are two kinds of causality, one according to the laws of nature, the other that of that of freedom; the antithesis maintains that there is only causality according to the laws of nature. The fourth antinomy proves that there is and is not, an absolutely necessary being. To elaborate this point, here is an example. Let us suppose that we start with a promise that God exist and attempt to prove his existence by arguments based on reason (not by faith or belief) .We may not able to prove the point and conclude that God does not exist. On the contrary if we start with a promise that that God does not exist and attempt to prove that promise by arguments we she hall end up in upholding existence of God. This is what the antinomies of reason are about!

KANT'S MORAL LAW - The Critique of Practical Reason

We must show that pure reason can be practical; i.e., can of itself determine the will independently of anything empirical, that the moral sense is innate and not derived from experience. The moral imperative which we need as the basis of religion must be an absolute, a categorical imperative. We should not yield to temptation by telling lie because it is to our advantage.

THE CATEGORICAL IMPARATIVE

What is it that brings the bite of remorse, and the new resolution? It is the categorical imperative in us, the unconditional command of our conscience, to “act as if the maxim of our action were to become by our will a universal law of Nature”. We know, not by reasoning, but by vivid and immediate feelings, that we must avoid behavior, which, if adapted by all men, would render social life impossible. Do I wish to escape from a predicament by a lie? But “while I can will the life, I can by no means will that lying should be a universal law. For with such a law there would be no promise at all.” Hence, the since in me, that I must not lie, even if it be to any advantage. Prudence is hypothetical; its motto is, honesty when it is the best policy; but the moral law in our hearts is unconditional and absolute. And an action is good not because it has good results, or because it is wise, but because it is done in obedience to this inner sense of duty, this moral law that does not come from our personal experience ,but legislates imperiously and a priori for all our behavior , past, present, and future. The only thing unqualifiedly good in this world is a good will- the will to follow the moral law, regardless of profit or loss for ourselves .Never mind your happiness ; do your duty. Morality is not properly the doctrine of how we may make ourselves happy, but how we may make ourselves worthy of happiness.

KANT ON THE EXISTENCE OF GOD

There are, he says. Only three proofs of God's existence by pure reason; these are the ontological proof, the cosmological proof and the psycho-theological proof. The ontological proof, as he set it forth, defines God as the most real being; i.e., the subject of all predicates that belong to being absolutely. It is contended, by those who belief the proof valid, that, since “existence” is such a predicate, this subject must have the predicate “existence” ,i.e., must exist. Kant objects that existence is not a predicate. A hundred thalers that I merely imagine may, he says, have all the same predicates as a hundred real thalers. The cosmological proof says: if anything exists, then an absolutely necessary being must exist; now I know that I exist; therefore an absolutely necessary being exists; and this must be the most real being. Kant maintains that the last step in this argument is the ontological argument over again, and that it is therefore refuted by what has been already said. The Psycho- theological proof as the familiar argument from design , but in a metaphysical dress. It maintains that the universe exhibits an order which is evidence of purpose. This argument is treated by Kant with respect, but he points out that at best, it proves only an architect, not a creator and therefore cannot given an adequate conception of God. He concludes that the only theology of reason which is possible is that which is based upon moral laws or seeks guidance from them. God, freedom and immortality, he says ,are the three “Ideas of Reason” . But although pure reason leads to from these ideas, it cannot itself prove their reality. Further, in other words God, freedom, Immortality are merely ideas and not something real. Nevertheless the acceptance of these Ideas gives some meaning to life and also a practical value connected with morals.

CONCLUSION

A famous thinker of the previous generation, Anandacoomarasamy of Srilanka found commonalities between Plato and Sankara's Advaita. Some others have added Kant to this group .This is some dvaita says that the

world as we perceive it is unreal Maya- is a world of appearance. The reality is indefinable. Plato also says that the world as we perceive it is only world of appearances – there is a real world about which God only knows. Modern philosophers have distinguished between the Noumenal and phenomenal worlds. Phenomenal world is the one which we perceive with our sensory organs – the world of phenomena as it appears to our senses –which may or may not be real. This is contrasted with the Noumenal world-which is independent of senses- and real .However, like Plato and Sankara, Kant also says that this world is unknown –or unknowable. It is on the points out that Empiricists had the last laugh. Even as he attempted to uphold the reality of Mathematics and other sciences – in the process Kant was constrained to say that the world of things as we perceive is only phenomenal-(unreal) as compared to the real world . (Noumenal) Which is u nknowable. Kant thus upheld the stand of Berkley and Hume – though that he had refuted them convincingly. Lastly –a word of caution. We are only presenting here the argument points of philosophers of different schools which is interesting to read. Who is right? We don't know the answer –but we can always ponder over these interesting arguments.

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