

A PREFACE AND TRIBUTE TO KANTIAN PHILOSOPHY

Kenneth Ogechukwu NWOYE

Department of Political Science, Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka, NIGERIA

Abstract

This work is an attempt to explore the enormous contributions of Immanuel Kant (1724-1804) to normative political and social thought. There is no debating the fact that Kant has had profound and lasting impact on virtually all areas of normative political and philosophized thought. This essay pays tribute to his effort while at the same time pointing out certain noticeable flaws in his effort. Using data in terms of his original works as well as detailed commentaries by scholars, the essay concludes that we need to learn a lot in the area of critical philosophy simply because it is at the core of all human knowledge. It is also particularly invaluable for leaders and those who desire to lead, particularly in Africa, to bother to reflect on some of their actions and utterances.

Keys words: Critique, critical theory, philosophy, pure reason and practical reason.

Introduction

Immanuel Kant, (1724-1804) was arguably one of the greatest, if not the greatest, of all modern philosophers. Over the years, Kant has continued to have a profound and lasting influence both in philosophy itself and across the full range of intellectual disciplines, including of course social sciences. The core of Kant's critical philosophy is generally taken to be his synthesis of the two rival traditions of empiricism and rationalism which dominated epistemology (or philosophical theory of knowledge) in Kant's time. Kant argued against the empiricists, that there were true synthetic a priori judgments which were not mere tautologies, yet which were not derived from experience. Kant's great work the *Critique of Pure Reason* (1781) is devoted to the demonstration of this claim and to the systematic derivations of those synthetic apriori concepts and judgments which were conditions of the possibility of our apprehension of space and time (the forms of intuition), and our making of objective judgments of experience (the categories), whilst not derivable from experience, could be legitimately applied only within the field of possible experience. To use the categories to offer accounts of 'things-in-themselves', beyond possible experience, was to fall into irresolvable contradiction. So, whilst rejecting a central doctrine of empiricism, Kant nevertheless shared with the leading empiricists a concern to defend the cognitive status of empirical science against theological and metaphysical claims to knowledge of 'things-in-themselves' beyond experience.

However, for Kant, thought about 'things-in-themselves' was unavoidable, even if knowledge of them was impossible. This was not least because of the necessity of a rational grounding for objective moral judgment. For an individual to be bound by a moral maxim requires both freedom of will and a unitary personal identity, neither of which is to be found among the contents of experience. Kant's treatment of aesthetics (in the *Critique of Judgement*, 1790) also makes use of ideas (such as 'forms of purposiveness') which can have no application in objective judgements of experience. Despite the anti-metaphysical leanings of the central arguments of Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason*, therefore, there remains a tension between a realm of objectively knowable objects of experience, on the one hand, and unavoidable allusions to an unknowable realm of 'things-in-themselves', on the other. This latter realm is especially required in the grounding of moral and aesthetic judgment and the identity of the perceiving, knowing and acting subject.

The principal non-positive epistemologies which have been influential in social sciences derive from various European traditions of interpretation and resolution of these tensions in Kant's philosophy, most especially neo-Kantianism, phenomenology, and hermeneutics of which Hegel, Marx, Habermas, Herbert Marcuse and others benefited the most. For example, Hegel's historical dialectic of self-realization of the 'Absolute idea' arose from the critique of Kant's philosophy and went on to inform both the view of history and the epistemology of Marx and Engels.

Biographical sketch

Immanuel Kant was born 27 April 1724 in Königsberg, Prussia the fourth of nine children. He was baptized 'Emmanuel'; later changed his name to 'Immanuel' after learning Hebrew. Kant showed a great aptitude for study at an early age. He first attended the Collegium Fredericianum and then enrolled at the University of Königsberg where he spent his entire career. In 1740 at the age of 16, he studied the philosophy of Gottfried Leibniz and Christian Wolff under Martin Knutzen, a rationalist who was also familiar with developments in British philosophy and science and who introduced him to the new mathematical physics of Isaac Newton. Knutzen dissuaded Kant from the theory of pre-established harmony, which he regarded as "the pillow for the lazy mind". He also dissuaded the young scholar from idealism, which most philosophers in the 18th century regarded in a negative light. (The theory of transcendental idealism that Kant developed in the *Critique of Pure Reason* is not traditional idealism in the second part of the *Critique of Pure Reason*.) In his entire life, he never travelled more than 10 miles (16km) from Königsberg. His mother Anna Regina Reuter (1697-1737), was born in Nuremberg. His father Johann George Kant (1682-1746), a German harness maker from Memel whose stroke and subsequent death in 1746 interrupted his studies. Kant became a private tutor in the smaller towns surrounding Königsberg, but continued his scholarly research. In 1747, he published his first philosophical work, *Thoughts on the True Estimation of Living Forces*. In his youth, Kant was a solid, albeit unspectacular, student. He was brought up in a Pietist household that stressed intense religious devotion, personal humility, and a literal interpretation of the Bible. Kant received a stern education-strict, punitive and disciplinary that preferred Latin and Religious instruction over mathematics and science. Despite his

upbringing in a religious household and still maintaining a belief in God, he was sceptical of religion in later life; various scholars have labelled him agnostic. It is often held that Kant lived a very strict and predictable life, leading to the oft-repeated story that neighbours would set their clocks by his daily walks. He never married, but did not seem to lack a rewarding social life.

Theoretical Framework

The adoption of a core theoretical basis of discourse is crucially necessary in an essay of this sort. This is because it helps us to put into perspective Kant's core arguments as well as guide us in terms of critical appreciation of merits and demerits of his entire philosophy. In this regard, we employ critical theory as analytic framework to guide our efforts. In social science, critical theory is most closely associated with the Frankfurt School of Social Research, although its origins can be traced back through Hegelianism and Western Marxism generally. The term now describes a very diverse strand of Marxism which over the past century for so, has drawn on a wide range of other influences including psychoanalysis and systems theory (Thannenbaum, 1975 and Waltzman, 1978).

The central principles of critical theory can perhaps be defined most clearly in contrast to some the principles of twentieth-century positivism indeed its proponents sometimes referred to it as negative philosophy. As opposed to the idea that knowledge comes from our sense experience, critical theory is a form of rationalism; that is, critical theorists maintain that the source of our knowledge comes from our sense-experience, critical theory is a form of rationalism; that is, critical theorists maintain that the source of our knowledge and the source of our common humanity is the fact that we are all rational being. Hegel stated that the real ought to be rational. Critical theory may be seen as stating that the real ought to be rational. Rationality, in this context, refers not to formal logic but to a dialectical process of thought, in which the whole is greater than the parts, and contradictions continually appear and disappear into new syntheses. For Hegel, history was moving relentlessly towards a rational conclusion; the Marxist appropriation of Hegel gradually eliminated the idea of inevitability and linked the process to human praxis. The most complete statement of this view can be found in the work of Gyorgy Lukacs (1969).

Critical theory usually involves the projection of some possible utopian state into the future, although (particularly in the works of the Frankfurt School) it sometimes seems that the utopian state was in the past. From the idea of rationality, it is possible to deduce the basic form of a rational society. By virtue of being human we all possess the quality or potentially of rational thought. A rational society, therefore, is one in which we all participate in order to create and transform our environment. The provides us with a standard by which we can criticize societies that exist in the present a society which excludes groups from economic and political participation, or which systematically renders groups from economic and political participation, or which systematically renders groups powerless, is an irrational society. In the work of Jurgen Habermas, the major modern representative of the school, a rather different model can be found. Habermas works not from our possession of rational faculties but from the fact that we all use language. His utopia is an ideal speech situation in which all have equal access to

information and public debate. In terms of theoretical argument, critical theory works dialectically, not juxtaposing one set of truth claims to another, but by searching out the internal contradictions and the gasps in a system of thought, and pushing these contradictions to the point where something different emerges. This is sometimes referred to as an internal critique.

The Frankfurt School for Social Research was founded in 1923 as a centre for socialist research. Its leading figures emigrated to America with the rise of Hitler and several remained there after the War. The central figures were Theodor Adorno, Max Horkheimer, and Hebert Marcuse. A number of other famous names were associated with it, including Leo Lowenthal, Karl Wittfogel, and Erich Fromm. From the beginning, the school was critical of orthodox Marxism, offering an analysis of ideology and politics and abandoning traditional forms of economic explanation. For the classic critical theory of the founders of the Frankfurt School, the main targets were so called instrumental reason, and the particular totalitarian form of domination that they saw developing in modern industrial society. Instrumental reason sees world, including other people, in terms of how we can exploit it; involves the separation of fact and value; and the relegation of values to an unimportant role in knowledge and life. This way of thinking is typical of industrial society and (according to critical theorists) is intimately linked to structures of domination. Therefore, by using critical theory, we are placed in a better position to appreciate why Kant devoted so much time and energy in criticizing other thinkers of his time. It also affords us the singular opportunity to discern why and how generations of scholars continue to criticize and revere him at the same time.

Research Methodology

As a normative philosophical study, the paper relied essentially on primary and secondary sources of data collection. In terms of primary data, every effort was made to trace and utilize Kant's original texts that were translated in English language. Attempts was also made to utilize all key publications dealing with Kant's life and works as published by scholars who sought to critically interpret and appraise Kant's enormous contributions to moral, political and ethical philosophy. Overall, the researcher conducted extensive verification and analysis of all the materials collected using content and descriptive techniques.

An Appraisal of Key Philosophical Contributions

Kant's major work the *Critique of Pure Reason (Kritik der reinen Vernunft, 1781)*; aimed to explain the relationship between reason and human experience with this project, he hoped to move beyond what he took to be failures of traditional philosophy and metaphysics. He attempted to put an end to what he considered an era of futile and speculative theories of human experience, while resisting the scepticism of thinkers such as David Hume.

Kant argued that our experiences are structured by necessary features of our minds. In his view, the mind shape and structures experience so that, on an abstract level, all human experience shares certain essential structural features. Among other things, Kant believed that the concepts of *space* and *time* are integral to all human experience, as are our

concepts of *cause* and *effect*. One important consequence of this view is that one never has *direct* experience of things, the so-called *noumenal* world, and that what we do by experience is the phenomenal world as conveyed by our senses. These claims summarize Kant's views upon the subject-object problem. Kant published other important works on ethics, religion, law, aesthetics, astronomy, and history. These included the *Critique of Practical Reason* (*Kritik der praktischen Vernunft*, 1788), the *Metaphysics of Morals* (*Die Metaphysik der Sitten*, 1797) which dealt with ethics, and the *Critique of Judgment* (*Kritik der Urteilskraft*, 1790), which looks at aesthetics and teleology.

Kant aimed to resolve disputes between empirical and rationalist approaches. The former asserted that all knowledge comes through experience; the latter maintained that reason and innate ideas were prior. Kant argued that experience is purely subjective without first being processed by pure reason. He also said that using reason without applying it to experience only leads to theoretical illusions. The free and proper exercise of reason by the individual was a theme both of the Age of Enlightenment, and of Kant's approaches to the various problems of philosophy. His ideas influenced many thinkers in Germany during his lifetime, and he moved philosophy beyond the debate between the rationalist and empiricist, (Beck, 1973). Kant is seen as a major figure in the history and development of philosophy.

In Kant's essay "Answering the Question: What is Enlightenment?" Kant defined the Enlightenment as an age shaped by the Latin motto *Sapere aude* (Dare to be wise). Kant maintained that one ought to think autonomously, free of the dictates of external authority. His work reconciled many of the differences between the rationalist and empiricist traditions of the 18th century. He had a decisive impact on the Romantic and German Idealist philosophies of the 19th century and his work has also been a starting point for many 20th century philosophers. Kant asserted that, because of the limitations of argumentation in the absence of irrefutable evidence, no one could really know whether there is a God and an afterlife or not. For the sake of morality and as a ground for reason, Kant asserted, people are justified in believing in God, even though they could never know God's presence empirically. To him, the preparations of reason therefore, is in what may be called pure philosophy, are in reality directed to those three problems only (God, the soul, and the freedom). However, these three elements in themselves still hold independent, proportional, objective weight individually. Moreover, in a collective relational context; namely, to know *what ought to be done*: if the will is free, if there is a God, and if there is a future world. As this concerns our actions with reference to the highest aims of life, we see that the ultimate intention of nature in her wise provision was really, in the constitution of our reason, directed to moral interests only.

The sense of an enlightened approach and the critical method required that "If one cannot prove that a thing *is*, he may try to prove that it is *not*. And if he succeeds in doing neither (as often occurs), he may still ask whether it is in his interest to accept one or the other of the alternatives hypothetically, from the theoretical or the practical point of view. Hence the question no longer is as to whether we may not be deceiving ourselves when we adopt the former alternative, but we must act on the supposition of its being real. The presupposition of God, soul, and freedom was then a practical concern, for "Morality, by

itself, constitutes a system, but happiness does not, unless it is distributed in exact proportion to morality. This, however, is possible in an intelligible world only under a wise author and ruler. Reasons compels us to admit such a ruler, together with life in such a world, which we must consider as future life, or else all moral laws are to be considered as idle dreams.

Kant is best known for his work in the philosophy of ethics and metaphysics, but he made significant and solid contributions to other disciplines. He made an important astronomical discovery, namely a discovery about the nature of Earth's rotation, for which he won the Berlin Academy Prize in 1754. Kant pointed out in the middle of 17th century, what had not previously been discovered by mathematicians or physical astronomers, that the frictional resistance against tidal currents on the earth's surface must cause a diminution of the earth's rotational speed. This immense discovery in Natural Philosophy seems to have attracted little attention, indeed to have passed quite unnoticed among mathematicians, and astronomers, and naturalists, until about 1840, when he doctrine of energy began to be taken to heart.

In the *General History of Nature and Theory of the Heavens (Allgemeine Naturgeschichte und Theorie des Himmels)* (1755), Kant laid out the Nebular hypothesis, in which he deduced that the Solar System formed from a large cloud of gas, a nebula. He thus attempted to explain the order of the solar system, seen previously by Newton as being imposed from the beginning by God. Kant also correctly deduced that the Milky Way was a large disk of stars, which he theorized also formed from a (much larger) spinning cloud of gas. He further suggested the possibility that other nebulae might also be similarly large and distant disks of stars. These postulations opened new horizons for astronomy: for the first time extending astronomy beyond the solar system to galactic and extragalactic realms.

From this point on, Kant turned increasingly to philosophical issues, although he continued to write on the sciences throughout his life. In the early 1760s, Kant produced a series of important works in philosophy. *The False Subtlety of the Four Syllogistic Figures*, a work in logic, was published in 1762. Two more works appeared the following year: *Attempt to Introduce the Concept of Negative Magnitudes into Philosophy and The only Possible Argument in Support of a Demonstration of the Existence of God*. In 1764, Kant wrote *Observations on the Feeling of the Beautiful and Sublime* and then was second to Moses Mendelssohn in a Berlin Academy prize competition with his *Inquiry Concerning the Distinctness of the Principles of Natural Theology and Morality* (often referred to as "The Prize Essay"). In 1770, at the age of 45, Kant was finally appointed Professor of Logic and Metaphysics at the University of Königsberg. Kant wrote his inaugural dissertation in defense of this appointment. This work saw the emergence of several central themes of his mature work, including the distinction between the faculties of intellectual thought and sensible receptivity. Not to observe this distinction would mean to commit the error of subjection, and as he says in the last chapter of the dissertation, only in avoidance of this error does metaphysics flourish.

The issue that vexed Kant was central to what twentieth century scholars termed "the philosophy of mind". The flowering of the natural sciences had led to an understanding of

how data reaches the brain. Sunlight may fall upon a distant object, whereupon light is reflected from various parts of the object in way maps the surface features (color, texture, etc.) of the object. The light reaches the eye of a human observer, passes through the cornea, is focused by the lens upon the retina where it forms an image similar to that formed by light passing through a pinhole into a camera *obscura*. The retinal cells next send impulses through the optic nerve and thereafter they form a mapping in the brain of the visual features of the distant object. The interior mapping is not the exterior thing being mapped, and our belief that there is a meaningful relationship between the exterior object and the mapping the brain depends on a chain of reasoning that is not fully grounded. But the uncertainty aroused by mapping in the brain depends on chain of reasoning that is not fully grounded. But the uncertainty aroused by these considerations, the uncertainties raised by optical illusions, misperceptions, delusions, etc., are not end of the problems.

Kant saw that the mind could not function as an empty container that simply receives data from the outside. Something must be giving order to the incoming data. Images of external objects must be kept in the same sequences in which they were received. This ordering occurs through the mind's intuition of time. The same considerations apply to the mind's function of constituting space for ordering mappings of visual and tactile signals arriving via the already described chains of physical causation. It is often held that Kant was a later developer, that he only became an important philosopher in his mid-50s after rejecting his earlier views. While it is true that Kant wrote his greatest works relatively late in life, there is a tendency to underestimate the value of his earlier works. Recent Kant scholarship has devoted more attention to these "pre-critical" writings and has recognized a degree of continuity with his mature work Wohlmann, (1970), Oppenheimer (2011), Sassen (2000), Roger (2001).

Other Specific Strands of Kant's Thought

On theory of perception Kant defines his theory of perception in his influential 1781 work *The Critique of Pure Reason*, which has often been cited as the most significant volume of metaphysics and epistemology in modern philosophy. Kant maintains that our understanding of the external world had its foundation not merely in experience, but in both experience and *priori* concepts, thus offering a non-empiricist critique of rationalist philosophy, which is what he referred to as his "Copernican revolution".

Firstly, Kant's distinction between analytic and synthetic propositions: (i) Analytic proposition: a proposition whose predicate concept is contained in its subject concept; e.g., "All bachelors are unmarried," or, " All bodies take up space." (ii) Synthetic proposition: a proposition whose predicate concept is not contained in its subject concept; e.g "All bachelors are happy," or, "All bodies have weight."

Analytic propositions are true by nature of the meaning of the words involved in the sentence we require no further knowledge than a grasp of the language to understand this proposition. On the other hand, synthetics are those that tell us something about the world. The truth or falsehood of synthetic statements derives from something outside of their linguistic content. In this instance, weight is not a necessary predicate of the body; until we are told the heaviness of the body we do not know that it has weight. In this case,

experience of the body is required before its heaviness becomes clear. Before Kant's first Critique, empiricists (Hume) and rationalists (Leibniz) assumed that all synthetic statements required experience to be known.

Kant, however, contests this: to him elementary mathematics, like arithmetic, is synthetic *a priori*, in that its statements provide new knowledge, but knowledge that is not derived from experience. This becomes part of his over-all argument for transcendental idealism. That is, he argues that the possibility of experience depends on certain necessary conditions which he calls *a priori* forms and that these conditions structure and hold true of the world of experience. In so doing, his main claims in the "Transcendental Aesthetic" are mathematic judgments are synthetic *a priori* and in addition, that Space and Time are not derived from experience but rather are its preconditions Stephen (1986)

Once we have grasped the concepts of addition, subtraction or the functions of basic arithmetic, we do not need any empirical experience to know that $100 + 100 = 200$, and in this way it would appear that arithmetic is in fact analytic. However, that it is analytic can be disproved thus: if the numbers five and seven in the calculation $5 + 7 = 12$ are examined, there is nothing to be found in them by which the number 12 can be inferred. Such it is that "5 + 7" and "the cube root of 1, 728" or "12" are not analytic because their reference is the same but their sense is not, that the mathematic judgment " $5 + 7 = 12$ " tells us something new about the world. It is self-evident, and undeniably *a priori*, but at the same time it is synthetic. And so Kant proves a proposition can be synthetic and known as *apriori*.

Kant also asserts that experience is based both upon the perception of external objects and *apriori* knowledge. The external world, he writes, provides those things that we sense. It is our mind, though, that processes this information about the world and gives it order, allowing us to comprehend it. Our mind supplies the conditions of space and time to experience objects. According to the "transcendental unity of apperception", the concepts of the mind (Understanding) and the perceptions or intuitions that garner information from phenomena (Sensibility) are synthesized by comprehension. Without the concepts, intuitions are nondescript; without the intuitions, concepts are meaningless thus the famous statement, "Thoughts without content are empty, intuitions without concepts are blind" Kant (1973).

Kant further makes the claim that an external environment is necessary for the establishment of the self. Although Kant would want to argue that there is no empirical way of observing the self, we can see the logical necessity of the self when we observe that we can have different perceptions of the external environment over time. By uniting all these general representations into one global representation, we can see how a transcendental self emerges. "I am therefore conscious of the identical self in regard to the manifold of the representations that are given to me in an intuition because I call them all together my representations".

On Categories of the Faculty of Understanding

Kant deemed it obvious that have some objective knowledge of the world, such as, say, Newtonian Physics. But this knowledge relies on synthetic, *a priori* laws of nature, like causality and substance. The problem, then, is how this is possible, and that these laws are

the synthetic, *a priori* laws of nature that we know apply to all objects before we experience them. So, to deduce all these laws, Kant examined experience in general, dissecting in it what is supplied by the mind from what is supplied by the given intuitions. What has just been explicated is commonly called a transcendental reduction Kant (1784).

To begin with, Kant's distinction between the *a posteriori* being contingent and particular knowledge, and the *a priori* being universal and necessary knowledge, must be kept in mind. For if we merely connect two intuitions together in a perceiving subject, the knowledge is always subjective because it is derived *a posteriori*, when what is desired is for the knowledge to be objective, that is, for the two intuitions to refer to the object and hold good of it necessarily universally for anyone at any time, not just the perceiving subject in its current condition. What else is equivalent to objective knowledge besides the *a priori*, that is to say, universal and necessary knowledge? Nothing else, and hence before knowledge can be objective, it must be incorporated under an *a priori* category of the *understanding* Kant (1781). For example, say a subject says, "The sun shines on the stone; the stone grows warm" which is all he perceives in perception. His judgment is contingent and holds no necessity. But if he says, "The sunshine causes the stone to warm," he subsumes the perception under the category of causality, which is not found in the perception, and necessarily synthesizes the concept sunshine with the concept heat, producing a necessarily universally true judgment.

To explain the categories in more detail, they are the preconditions of the construction of objects in the mind. Indeed, to even think of the sun and stone presupposes the category of subsistence, that is, substance. For the categories synthesize the random data of the sensory manifold into intelligible objects. This means that the categories are also the most abstract things one can say of any object whatsoever, and hence one can have a *a priori* cognition of the totality of all objects of experience if one can list all of them. To do so, Kant formulates another transcendental deduction. Judgments are, for Kant, the preconditions of any thought. Man thinks via judgments, so all possible judgments must be listed and the perceptions connected within them put aside, so as to make it possible to examine the moments when the *understanding* is engaged in constructing judgments. For the categories are equivalent to these moments in that they are concepts of intuitions in general, so far so they are determined by these moments universally and necessarily. Thus by listing all the moments, one can deduce from them all of the categories.

One may now ask: How many possible judgments are there? Kant believed that all the possible propositions within Aristotle's syllogistic logic are equivalent to all possible judgments, and that all the logical operators within the propositions are equivalent to the moments of the *understanding* within judgments. Thus he listed Aristotle's system in four groups of three: quantity (universal, particular, and singular), quality (affirmative, negative, and infinite), relation (categorical, hypothetical, and disjunctive) and modality (problematic, assertoric, apodictic). The parallelism with Kant's categories is obvious: quantity (unity, plurality, and totality), quality (reality, negation, and limitation), relation (substance, cause, community) and modality (possibility, existence, necessity).

The fundamental building blocks of experience, that is, objective knowledge, are now in place. First there is the sensibility, which supplies the mind with intuitions, and then

there is the understanding, which produces judgments of these intuitions and can subsume them under categories. The categories lift the intuitions up out of the subject's current state of consciousness and place them within consciousness in general, producing universally necessary knowledge. For the categories are innate in any rational being, so any intuition thought within a category in one mind is necessarily subsumed and understood identically in any mind. In other words, we filter what we see and hear.

On Moral Philosophy

Kant developed his moral philosophy in three works: *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals* (1785), *Critique of Practical Reason* (1788) and *Metaphysics of Morals* (1797). In the *Groundwork*, Kant's method involves trying to convert our everyday, obvious, rational knowledge of morality into philosophical knowledge. The latter two works followed a method of using "practical reason", which is based only upon things about which reason can tell us, and not deriving any principles from experience, to reach conclusions which are able to be applied to the world of experience (in the second part of *The Metaphysics of Morals*).

Kant is known for his theory that there is a single moral obligation, which he called the "Categorical Imperative", and is derived from the concept of duty. Kant defines the demands of the moral law as "categorical imperatives". Categorical imperatives are principles that are intrinsically valid; they are good in and of themselves; they must be obeyed by all, in all situations and circumstances, if our behavior is to observe the moral law. It is from the Categorical Imperative that all other moral obligations are generated, and by which all more obligations can be tested. Kant also stated that the moral means and ends can be applied to the categorical imperative, that rational beings can pursue certain "ends" using the appropriate "means". Ends that are based on physical needs or wants always give merely hypothetical imperatives. The categorical imperative, however, may be based only on something that is an "end in itself". That is, an end that is a means only to itself and not to some other need, desire or purpose. He believed that the moral law is a principle of reason itself, and is not based on contingent facts about the world, such as what would make us happy, but to act upon the moral law which has no other motive than "worthiness of being happy". Accordingly, he believed that moral obligation applies only to rational agents.

A categorical imperative is an unconditional obligation; that is, it has the force of an obligation regardless of our will or desires (Contrast this with hypothetical imperative) In *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals* (1785) Kant enumerated three formulations of the categorical imperative that he believed to be roughly equivalent. Kant believed that if an action is not done with the motive of duty, then it is without moral value. He thought that every action should have pure intention behind it; otherwise it was meaningless. He did not necessarily believe that the final result was the most important aspect of an action, but that how the person felt while carrying out the action was the time at which value was set to the result. In *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals*, Kant also posited the "counter-utilitarian" idea that there is a difference between preferences and values and that

consideration of individual rights temper calculations of aggregate utility”, a concept that is an axiom in economics.

Everything has either a *price* or a *dignity*. Whatever has a price can be replaced by something else as its equivalent; on other hand, whatever is above all price, and therefore admits of no equivalent, has a dignity. But that which constitutes the condition under which alone something can be an end in itself does not have mere relative worth, that is, price, but an intrinsic worth, that is, a dignity. A phrase quoted by Kant, which is used to summarize the counter-utilitarian nature of his moral philosophy, is *Fiat justitia, perreat mundus*, (“Let justice be done, though the world perish”), which he translates loosely as “Let justice reign even if all the world should perish from it”. This appears in his 1795 *Perpetual Peace* (Zum ewigen Frieden. Ein philosophischer Entwurf).

On the Three Formulations

The first formulation The first formulation (Formula of Universal Law) of the moral imperative “requires that the maxims be chosen as though they should hold as universal laws of nature” This formulation in principle has as its supreme law the creed “Always act according to that maxim whose universality as a law you can at the same time will” and is the “only condition under which a will can never come into conflict with itself.

One interpretation of first formulation is called the “universalizability test”. An agent’s maxim, according to Kant, is his “subjective principle of human actions”. That is, what the agent believes is his reason to act. The universalizability test has five steps: (1) Find the agent’s maxim (i.e, an action paired with its motivation). Take for example the declaration “I will lie for personal benefit”. Lying is the action; the motivation is to fulfil some sort of desire. Paired together, they form the maxim. (2) Imagine a possible world in which everyone in a similar position to the real-world agent followed that maxim. With no exception of one’s self. This is in order for you to hold people to the same principle required of yourself. (3) Decide whether any contradictions or irrationalities arise in the possible world as a result of following the maxim. (4) If a contradiction or irrationality arises, acting on that maxim is not allowed in the real world. (5) If there is no contradiction, then acting on that maxim is permissible, and is sometimes required.

The second formulation The second formulation (or Formula of the End in itself) holds that “the rational being, as by its nature an end and thus an end in itself, must serve in every maxim as the condition restricting all merely relative and arbitrary ends”. The principle dictates that you “act” with reference to every rational being (whether yourself or another) so that it is an end in itself in your maxim”, meaning that the rational being “the basis of all maxims of action” and “must be treated never as a mere means but as the supreme limiting condition in the use of all means, i.e, as an end at the same time”.

The third formulation The third formulation (Formula of Autonomy) is a synthesis of the first two and is the basis for the “complete determination of all maxims”. It says “that all maxims which stem from autonomous legislation ought to harmonize with a possible realm of ends as with a realm of nature”. In principle, “So act as if your maxims should serve at the same time as the universal law (of all rational beings)”, meaning that we should so act that we may think of ourselves as “a member in the universal realm of ends”,

legislating universal laws through our maxims (that is, a code of conduct), in a “possible realm of ends”. None may elevate themselves above the universal law; therefore, it is one’s duty to follow the maxims(s).

On Religion within the Limits of Reason

Kant articulates his strongest criticisms of the organization and practices of religious organizations to those that encourage what he sees as a religion of counterfeit service to God. Among the major targets of his criticism are external ritual, superstition and a hierarchical church order. He sees all these as efforts to make oneself pleasing to God in ways other than conscientious adherence to the principle of moral rightness in the choice of one’s action. The severity of Kant’s criticisms on these matters, along with his rejection of the possibility of theoretical proofs for the existence of God and his philosophical re-interpretation of some basic Christian doctrines, have provided the basis for interpretations that see Kant as thoroughly hostile to religion in general and Christianity in particular (e.g., Walsh 1967). Nevertheless, other interpreters consider that Kant was trying to mark off a defensible rational core of Christian belief. Kant sees in Jesus Christ the affirmation of a “pure moral disposition of the heart” that “can make man well-pleasing to God”.

On the Idea of Freedom

In the *Critique of Pure Reason*, Kant distinguishes between the transcendental idea of freedom, which as a psychological concept is “mainly empirical” and refers to “the question whether we must admit a power of spontaneously beginning a series of successive things or states” as a real ground of necessity in regard to causality, and the practical concept of freedom as the independence of our will from the “coercion” or “necessitation through sensuous impulses”. Kant finds it a source of difficulty that the practical interests uses the practical meaning, taking “no account of its transcendental meaning” which he feels was properly “disposed of” in the Third Antinomy, and as an element in the question of the freedom of the will is for philosophy “a real stumbling-block” that has “embarrassed speculative reason.

Kant calls practical “everything that is possible through freedom”, and the pure practical laws that are never given through sensuous conditions but are held analogously with the universal law of causality are moral laws. Reason can give us only the “the pragmatic laws of free action through the senses”, but pure practical laws given by reason *a priori* dictate “what ought to be done”.

On the categories of freedom In the *Critique of Practical Reason*, at the end of the second main part of *Analytical*, Kant introduces in analogy with the categories of understanding their practical counterparts, the categories of freedom. Kant’s categories of freedom appear to have primarily three functions as conditions of the possibility for actions (i) to be free, (ii) to be comprehensible as free and (iii) to be morally evaluated. For Kant actions, although qua theoretical objects they are always already constituted by means of the theoretical categories, qua practical objects (objects of reason in its practical use, i.e objects qua possible good or bad) they are constituted by means of the categories of freedom; and

it is only in this way that actions, qua phenomena, can be a consequence of freedom, and can be understood and evaluated as such.

In *Perpetual Peace: A Philosophical Sketch* Kant listed several conditions that he thought necessary for ending wars and creating a lasting peace. They included a world of constitutional republics. His classical republican theory as extended in the *Science of Right*, the first part of the *Metaphysics of Morals* (1797). Kant's political teaching may be summarized in a phrase: republican government and international organization. In more characteristically Kantian terms, it is doctrine of the state based upon the law (*Rechtsstaat*) and of eternal peace. Indeed, in each of these formulations, both terms express the same idea: that of legal constitution or of "peace through law". Taken simply by itself, Kant's political philosophy, being essentially a legal doctrine, rejects by definition the opposition between moral education and the play of passions as alternate foundations for social life. The state is defined as the union of men under law. The state rightly so called is constituted by laws which are necessary a priori because they flow from the very concept of law. A regime can be judged by no other criteria nor be assigned any other functions, than those proper to the lawful order as such.

He opposed "democracy", which at his time meant direct democracy, believing that majority rule posed a threat to individual liberty. He stated, "democracy is., properly speaking, necessarily a despotism, because it establishes an executive power in which "all" decide for or even against one who does not agree that is, 'all', who are not quite all, decide, and this is a contradiction of the general will with itself and with freedom. As with most writers at the time, he distinguished three forms of government i.e. democracy, aristocracy, and monarchy with mixed government as the most ideal form of it.

Critique

While acknowledging the enormous and incredible contributions of Kant to Western political and social philosophy, it is also extremely important to note that his ideas are not perfect or sacrosanct. One major flaw of Kantian philosophy is his complicated approach to writing and argumentation. Even among German thinkers, he is widely regarded as a difficult thinker in view of his complex pattern of logical deduction and abstract formalism Bader (2008), Broad (1978), Banham (2006).

Secondly Kant never considered other civilizations and mode of thought as important. This is because of his strong Christian upbringing as well as the social environment that conditioned his thought made him ambivalent and clueless when it comes to placing his ideas within cross-cultural context. Third, Kant failed to place his thought within a historical and cultural setting. As a Rational Purist, he believed in the power of idealistic thinking; in all his writings, his core concern was to push the boundaries of human intellect to think and reason logically. He never showed much interest in the practicality of his reasoning, believing strongly that human knowledge can be pursued for its own sake. In short, it was Kant that almost singlehandedly synthesized the two rival tradition of Empiricism and Normativism in a highly systematic way. Despite his efforts, he failed to point the way regarding the role of human nature in shaping all forms of knowledge. This is why scholars like Luchte (2008), Beiser (1987), Allison (1983), Manfred (1984) and

Stephen (1986) criticized him severely for being too abstract and unrealistic. These scholars argued in different ways that the only phenomenon of which can be certain is that of human existence. They also pointed out that why abstract thinking is very helpful in modern philosophy, it is also very crucial to consider how and why abstract philosophy can be made more useful in dealing with the most important human problems of our time. Finally, Kant failed to look at the material and social conditioning of thought-forms. By so doing, his Eurocentric and unilinear orientation became easily noticeable. This unilinearity common with western thinkers has continued to undermine their arguments. This is because of the "superiority complex" that beclouds most of their thinking.

Despite Kant's philosophical weakness, he deserves our profound respect when we consider the period in which he lived. No other philosopher has exerted so much influence and respect in terms of range of his thought and the level of meticulous exegesis which he brought to bear on his ideas. In this regard, Kant matters to us in Africa simply because we rarely devote time and energy to deep philosophical introspection. In a continent crippled by chronic poverty of leadership, it is important that leaders reflect on their actions. More fundamentally; it is extremely vital that those in power reflect deeply on the consequences of their leadership. This is simply because if people are the end of governance, then their wellbeing should be of utmost concern.

Conclusion

Kant's achievements and influence on Western political thought has been profound over and above his influence on specific thinkers, Kant changed the framework within which philosophical inquiry has been carried out. He ushered a paradigm shift and very little philosophy is now carried out in the style of pre-Kantian philosophy. This shift consists in several closely related innovations that have become axiomatic in philosophy itself and in the social sciences and humanities generally: (1) Kant's "Copernican revolution", that placed the role of the human subject or knower at the centre of inquiry into our knowledge, such that it is impossible to philosophize about things as they are independently of us or of how they are for us. (2) His invention of critical philosophy, that is of the notion of being able to discover and systematically explore possible inherent limits to our ability to know through philosophical reasoning. (3) His creation of the concept of "conditions of possibility", as in his notion of "the conditions of possible experience" that is that things, knowledge, and forms of consciousness rest on prior conditions that make them possible, so that, to understand or to know them, we must first understand these conditions. (4) His theory that objective experience is actively constituted or constructed by the functioning of the human mind. (5) His notion of moral autonomy as central to humanity. (6) His assertion of the principle that human beings should be treated as ends rather than as means.

Kant's notion of "Critique" or criticism has been quite influential. The Early German Romantics, especially Friedrich Schlegel in his "Athenaeum Fragments", (1815) used Kant's self-reflexive conception of criticism in their Romantic theory of poetry. Also in Aesthetic, Clement Greenberg, in his classic essay "Modernist Painting", uses Kantian criticism, what Greenberg refers to as "immanent criticism", to justify the aims of Abstract

painting, a movement Greenberg was aware of the key limitation “flatness” that makes up the medium of painting. French philosopher Michel Foucault was also greatly influenced by Kant’s notion of “Critique” and wrote pieces on Kant for a rethinking enlightenment as a form of “critical thought”. He went so far as to classify his own philosophy as a “critical history of modernity, rooted in Kant”.

Kant believed mathematics roots were forms of synthetic, a priori knowledge, which means they are necessary and universal, yet known through intuition. Kant’s often brief remarks about mathematics influenced the mathematical school known as intuitionism, a movement in philosophy of mathematics opposed to Hilbert formalism, and the logics of Frege Bertrand Russell. Hegel was one of Kant’s first major critics. In response to what he saw as Kant’s abstract and formal account, Hegel brought about an ethic focused on the “ethical life” of the community. But Hegel’s notion of “ethical life” is meant to subsume, rather than replace Kantian ethics. And Hegel can be seen as trying to defend Kant’s idea of freedom as going beyond finite “desires”, by means of reason. Thus, in contrast to later critics like Nietzsche or Russel, Hegel shares some of Kant’s most basic concerns.

With the success and rising influence of Hegel’s writings, Kant’s influence began to wane, though there was in Germany a movement that hailed a return to Kant in the 1860s, beginning with the publication of *Kant und die Epigonen* in 1865 by Otto Liebmann. His motto was “Back to Kant”, and a re-examination of his ideas began (See Neo-Kantianism). The turn of the twentieth century witnessed an important revival of Kant’s theoretical philosophy known as the Marburg School, and was represented in the works of Herman Cohen, Paul Natorp. Ernst Cassirer, and anti-Neo-Kantian Nicolai Hartmann.

References

- Allison, H. (1983), *Kant’s Transcendental Idealism*. New Haven: Yale University Press
- Bader, R. (2008); “Kant, Immanuel (1724-1804)”. In Hamowy, Ronald. *The Encyclopedia of Libertarianism*. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE; Cato Institute. Pp. 269-71.
- Banham, G. (2006), *Kant’s Transcendental Imagination*. London and New York: Palgrave Macmillan
- Beiser, F. (1987), *The Fate of Reason: German Philosophy from Kant to Fichte*. Massachuset Harvard University Press.
- Beiser, F. (2002) *German Idealism: The Struggle against Subjectivism, 1781-1801*. Massachuset Harvard University Press.
- Beck, L.W (1973) “Neo-Kantianism” in *Encyclopedia of Philosophy*. Vol. 5-6. London: Macmillan
- Broad, C.D. (1978) *Kant: An Introduction*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Kant, I. (1784), “*An Answer to the Question: What is Enlightenment? Beantwortung der Frage: Aufklarung*”
- Kant, I. (1781), *Critique of Pure Reason*. London: Norman Kemp
- Kant, I. (1781), *Critique of Pure Reason*. edited and translated by Paul Guyer and Allen W. Wood. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Kant (1785) *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals*. Translated and edited by Hans Schlegge. Berlin: Free University of Berlin, Germany.

- Kant (1788 *Critique of Practical Reason*..Translated and edited by Hans Schlegge. Berlin: Free University of Berlin, Germany.
- Kant (1797) *Metaphysics of Morals*. Translated and edited by Hans Schlegge. Berlin: Free University of Berlin, Germany.
- Kant, I. (1973), *Preface to the Groundwork*. London: Norman Kemp.
- Kant, I. (1973), German Idealism in "History of Aesthetics" *Encyclopedia of Philosophy*. Vol V-VI. London: Macmillan
- Kant, I. (1987), *History of Political Philosophy, edited by Leo Strauss and Joseph Cropsey*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Kant, I. (1973) "*Religion within the Limits of Reason Alone*". Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Karl, A. (1982), *Kant's Theory of the Mind: An Analysis of the Paralogisms of Pure Reason*. Oxford: Clarendon Press
- Lukacs, G. (1979) *The Problem with Kantian Philosophy*. Germany: Free Press
- Lukacs, G. (1980) *Critical Philosophy and Marxism*. Brussels: Praider Press.
- Luchte, J, (2008), *Kant's Critique of Pure Reason*. London: Bloomsbury Publishing.
- Manfred, R. (1984), *German Idealism in "History of Aesthetics" Encyclopedia of Philosophy*. Vol. I. Cambridge: Macmillan
- Oppenheimer, O (2011) *Kant: A mature reader*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Pellzer, T. (2015) *Kant and the rise and fall of German idealism*. London: Elsevier
- Roger, S. (2001), *Kant: a Very Short Introduction*. Oxford University Press.
- Robert, C. (2009). "*The Kantian Sublime and the Revelation of Freedom*" Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Robert, P. (1989), *Hegel's Idealism*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Sassen, B (2000) (ed.) *Kant's Early Critics: The Empiricist Critique of the Theoretical Philosophy*, Cambridge.
- Stephen, P. (1993), *Kant's System of Perspectives: An Architectonic interpretation of the Critical Philosophy*. Lanham, MD: University Press of America.
- Stephen, P. (1986), "*The Architectonic Form of Kant's Copernican Logic*", *Metaphilosophy* pp. 266-288; revised 2003 as Chapter III of *Kant's System of Perspectives: An architectonic interpretation of the Critical Philosophy*. Lanham: University Press of America.
- Thannenbaum, K. (1975) *Kant and Marx: A comparative study*. Moscow: Progress Publishers.
- Walsh C. (1967) "*Kant and German Idealism*". Freiburg: University of Freiburg Press.
- Waltzman, P. (1978) *Kant and the Neo Marxists: A study*. London: Virago.
- Wohlmann (1970) "*Kant: A Companion*" Vol. I-III Wurzburg: Bronckman Press.

Biographical Note

Kenneth Ogechukwu NWOYE is a Senior Lecturer in the Department of Political Science, Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka, NIGERIA. His area of specialization and research interest are political theory and political economy **Email:** knwoye@yahoo.com.