

ABSTRACT

Immanuel Kant (1724-1804), an eighteenth century German philosopher, is known in the history of philosophy for his many epoch-making views. Usually we come to know that his significant philosophical thought began with the publication of his *Critique of Pure Reason* in 1781. This well-known book is also considered by many as his most important writing and views articulated there directed his future views enunciated in almost two-decade-long other written works. This view may seem right from one standpoint. It is right in the sense that he enunciated and outlined significant number of views in this work and later works may be considered as extensions of this spadework. It is in this book that he couched the general problem of the *Critique* which is popularly expressed in a question: How are synthetic *a priori* judgements possible? The question that he raised, the solution that he gave, the terminologies that he used in his solution, the distinctions that he made in order to convey his views to his readers became very popular in philosophical discourse. But like many other issues in philosophy his question, his solution, his terminologies, his distinctions have been subjected to further scrutiny at the subsequent stage by other philosophers. Some agreed with him, some disagreed with him, some, again, found his view completely otiose as well as unacceptable. While doing this these philosophers generated huge literature on this issue which I found worth revisiting, meditating on and re-examining in the new light with newer insight. The present work is an endeavour towards this direction. It might appear that the issue is a quite old one and what is the necessity of such a study. But scrutiny of certain literature in this area made me believe firmly that newer insights have brought further scope to extricate issues that were not possible over two hundred years back or even after that. It is this conviction which impelled me to undertake this work and choose this topic.

We in the preceding passage mentioned that there are scholars who consider that 1781 is the dividing line when Kant began to give his critical

philosophy. During my study I have come across evidences which made me feel that though there is substance in this claim, but there is no reason to think that the philosophy that he espoused before the aforesaid important juncture (i. e., the year 1781) and after that juncture or since that time there was any sharp difference as we find in Ludwig Wittgenstein's philosophy (for which he is known as early and later Wittgenstein). Rather a study of his pre-critical philosophy persuades me to hold that in his progression of philosophical thinking there is a continuity. This is not to claim that he was aware about the general problem of the *Critique of Pure Reason* right from the time he began to express his views either in philosophy or in other branches of knowledge in pre-critical span.

When I first set to work on this topic, i. e. about formulation of the general problem of the *Critique*, his protracted effort to demonstrate clearly the presence of this particular sort of judgement (synthetic as well as *a priori*), which his predecessors failed to notice in various fields of knowledge, I first collected books written by Kant himself. However, the problem I faced was that Kant wrote in German language about which I had little knowledge. Hence I had to bank on English translations of his books. I tried to collect translations made by various writers and commentaries written by them. For example, *Critique of Pure Reason* itself has been translated or commented by a number of scholars. I have come across translations of Norman Kemp Smith, Maxmuller, H. J. Paton, A. C. Ewing and so on. Again N. K. Smith has produced a voluminous commentary on this monograph. I began with a study of these great scholars' writings. About Kant's other writings also I followed the same method. Having got knowledge of these I concentrated on secondary sources, critics' views, their rejoinders and so on. Letters written by Kant to many scholars, I found, were an important source of exposition of his own stand on a number of issues. This approach coupled with own contemplation has gone hand in hand throughout the time I remain engaged with work. I consulted several libraries out of which I must mention ICPR's

library located in Lucknow and North Bengal University's library. In these two libraries I found maximum materials and were helpful for my current work.

Though my work focuses Kant's philosophy of critical phase and even only one core issue of this stage it occurred to me that any systematic study of his philosophy must begin with a survey of his pre-critical philosophy as well. It is because there is a long antecedent of this critical phase and ignoring this fact will take us away from reality. Hence, as I planned to divide my work in five chapters and decided to devote some portion of the first chapter about his pre-critical stage's philosophy. It is interesting to note that the nature of work of this phase was so diverse. It is so as he was not writing on issues of philosophy only but also of other areas. I found it a difficult task to grasp his views of this span as it contains a lot of jargons of subjects he dealt with. However, after several studies of some of his writings of that span revealed it to me that the view he gave in his a number of significant writings contain uniformity in his view. He in that spell of his philosophy mainly focused on understanding natural phenomena, their underlying principles and of course some metaphysical issues. Conceptual solutions that he offered of some phenomena soon caught attention of prominent scientists of that time and even in some cases, e. g. his evolutionary theory of the universe, they were considered as model in their respective field.

His effort to understand the power of nature is visible in his number of writings. Another interesting feature that I noticed in his this part's writing is secular interpretation that he gave of natural phenomena. During the time we are taking about it was a remarkable event. He even in certain cases disagreed with Newton who gave non-secular interpretations by way of holding that cosmic operations require the divine intervention. Countering Newton's view Kant held that the purpose that we find in nature is not divine imposition, rather it is inherent in its own fabric. Even in his interpretation of Leibniz he again exhibited this secular trend. From this we can easily guess that his view on religion that he articulated in 1790s will be utterly different from the then prevalent view. Even he

expressed some views on aesthetics in this span which hints at his matured view on the same subject in critical spate. Thus these pre-critical writings clearly signal what he is going to enunciate in his critical philosophy. It is for this reason that I have been given the impression that these two stages though named differently are actually continuation of the same trend of philosophy.

After a couple of years of lull the *Critique of Pure Reason* was published in 1781. It is here that Kant outlined his future plan by way of advocating a philosophy which was in fact revolutionary. Other important writings of critical phase are *Groundwork of the Metaphysic of Morals*, *Critique of Practical Reason* and *Critique of Judgement, Religion within the bounds of Reason Alone*, etc. In the *Critique of Pure Reason* he formulated his main problem and then he decided to address this in different spheres of knowledge for which he authored separate treatise. Formulation of this problem was not a very easy job. In order to state the problem and its solution he had to spend considerable time by way of preparation of its groundwork which ultimately resulted in a voluminous monograph. We discussed all these issues in the **first chapter** under the title 'Introduction'. We also made effort to show why he thought he could give a befitting response to Hume.

The **second chapter** deals with his discovery of synthetic *a priori* knowledge in mathematics, natural sciences and in metaphysics. But I did not plunge straightway to this issue. First, I devoted certain pages for distinction that Kant made between *a priori* and *a posteriori* knowledge and their distinctive features. Though Kant gave us two features of *a priori* knowledge he did not elaborate the nature of these traits. We on the basis of reading of his treaties tried to give an analysis of these attributes. Some critics held that marks of *a priori* judgements are not as clear as Kant thought them to be. Particularly the notion of necessity has been a matter of debate in philosophy since ancient period and the debate does not seem to end. We took up such a debate about the Kantian notion of necessity and sever criticism that it has been subjected to by Richard Robinson.

We found that Robinson's criticism can be rebutted if we clearly analyse Kant's view. The *a priori* notion that Kant explained and gave prominence were a matter of intense discussion in post-Kantian era. What is the exact nature of *a priori* and its extent were the center-points of discussions. In spite of this argumentation, philosophers by and large accepted that there is a type of knowledge which Kant called *a priori*. Hence a number of scholars tried to give a workable minimalist interpretation of this notion pending a clear picture of it. We tried to show what constitutes this minimalist interpretation.

Next we took up his distinction done between analytic and synthetic judgements. I tried, following Kant, to analytically explain them. Interestingly, I found some letters written by Kant where he further explained his view about this distinction and also answered criticisms made against his view. Having explained the distinction we created room for entering into core of the discussion—synthetic *a priori* knowledge. We also showed other combinations such as analytic *a priori* knowledge, analytic *a posteriori* knowledge etc. and elucidated them and explained Kant's view about them. In the province of synthetic *a priori* we gave maximum attention. We did so as it is Kant's center of deliberation and also original contribution. Reading of Kant gave me the impression that he did not have iota of doubt about the possibility and existence of this sort of knowledge. Rather his prime concern was to show how they are possible. That is why he traversed from one field to another and tirelessly argued and demonstrated their possibilities. In the prefaces of his 1st *Critique* he showed that in the history of knowledge Mathematics has made tremendous progress whereas metaphysics, which was once considered as queen of all knowledge, could not make any significant headway. In demonstrating the existence of synthetic *a priori* cognition he first took recourse to mathematical knowledge. While we discussed his views we also elaborately showed why Kant considers them to be synthetic besides being *a priori*. It is the syntheticity that was in dispute as *a prioricity* of mathematical knowledge was not questioned by anybody during Kant or before him. He took

examples from arithmetic, geometry and algebra to prove his points. We have discussed them in the current chapter as thoroughly as possible.

Then Kant moves to natural sciences. Taking instances from principles of physical sciences Kant illustrates how synthetic *a priori* knowledge do exists there. His arguments have far-reaching implications because if these arguments hold good, they will be a befitting response to Hume's misgiving about cause effect relations. When it comes to the arena of metaphysics he bisects the question. As metaphysics as natural disposition already exists in some form or other, he now raises question how is it possible as science. He was under the impression that scientific certainty can be achieved in metaphysics also if worked out scrupulously. Kant made attempt towards this direction and relegating speculative metaphysics to the background he now brought to the forefront another type of metaphysics what P. F. Strawson called descriptive metaphysics. Kant is of the opinion that his discovery of the *a priori* forms of intuition and *a priori* forms of understanding or what he termed categories of understanding accomplishes this task. It also ushered a revolution in philosophy which he compared with revolution brought in astronomy by Copernicus.

In the next chapter, i. e. **third chapter** we focused our attention to the second *Critique*. However, he began our discussion from the previous *Critique*. It is here where we find clues what he intends to do in the realm of moral philosophy. Kant was least interested with commonsense ideas of morality rather his quest centers around foundational principles of morality. When he searches synthetic *a priori* elements in morality what he wants to show is that it is these principles which are synthetic as well as *a priori*. In a sense such principles are derived from his notion of reason. He here talks about reason's capacity to legislate. This capacity is not constitutive (like the 1st *Critique*) rather Kant calls them regulative or to put it more succinctly it is regulative use of reason. Instead of providing us conditions of the possibility of experience it furnishes us conditions of the determination what should not be done.

Kant's task was to show two things—the supreme principle of morality is synthetic and also he had to show it is *a priori*. Kant gave a technical meaning to syntheticity and *a prioricity* when he called the categorical imperative synthetic and *a priori*. Kant takes enough guard against the temptation of terming our ordinary moral judgements synthetic and *a priori*. His establishment of connection between rational element in human being and his moral behavior is indeed a splendid one. We in this chapter tried to show his arguments in favour of his view that presence of elements of rationality demands conformity to some moral requirements. This demand necessitates presumption of a supreme principle which hold within its womb *a prioricity* and syntheticity.

We in our critical estimate of his duty-based ethics also attempted a comparative study of his philosophy with Indian counterpart. Taking instances from classical Indian sources as well as from some contemporary Indian philosophers we showed similarities and dissimilarities between these two types of philosophies and some shortcomings of Kant's view as pointed out by Dr. S. Radhakrishnan.

In the **fourth chapter** we moved to the sphere of aesthetics which Kant gave mainly in his 3rd *Critique*. We began with his letter written to K. L. Reinhold and the hints that he gave in his letter. We here tried to show what he meant by judgement and what he meant by faculty of judgement. We discussed, following him, whether the power or the faculty of judgement confers on us any capacity to construct an *a priori* principle. We have seen what synthetic *a priori* judgements meant in the two previous *Critique*(s). In 1st *Critique* it made knowledge of objects possible (in other words they uncovered those conditions which make our experience possible). In the 2nd *Critique* it was regulative (it laid down conditions for determining what should not be done). In the 3rd *Critique* now by synthetic *a priori* Kant imparts a new sense. Aesthetic judgments or also what he called reflective judgements do not subsume any particular under the universal. Here

once particulars are given then *power* of judgement decode a universal rule. Herein lies the difference. In the present case the movement is from particular to the universal. In holding that faculty of Judgement classifies natural experiences in a logical system Kant hints at the power of judgement. He argues that reflective judgement is under an obligation to advance from a known empirical domain to an unknown realm and of course which can be accomplished. We have discussed this view of Kant in a bit detail.

Kant talks about four classes of aesthetic judgements—judgements of the agreeable, judgements of the beautiful, judgements of the sublime and judgements of the good. Out of these four types of reflective judgements he discusses at length about judgements of the beautiful and judgements of the sublime. Hence we also at length discussed about these two sorts of judgement. Kant talks about four moments of the reflective judgement of the beautiful and narrated the nature of this type of reflective judgement under these moments. We discussed these four moments concisely however not losing their spirits. Then we showed how judgements of beauty become possible. He does not accept either empiricist interpretation or rationalist interpretation of aesthetic judgements. He shows how judgements of beauty are the result of free play of the faculties of understanding and imagination.

Having discussed the above view of Kant we moved to his view about judgement of sublime. He discussed his view under ‘Analytic of the Sublime’ at length. The notion of sublime was center of attention in aesthetic judgment even long before Kant. Hence it is not astonishing that Kant will deal with this issue in detail. We explained his view on sublime and its difference from beauty.

After discussing all the three *Critiques* and Kant’s new-found synthetic *a priori* knowledge we got down to views given by his Critics. Kant’s philosophy left indelible impression in the mind of his contemporaries and in post-Kantian period. His distinction between analytic and synthetic judgements, cleavage

between *a priori* and *a posteriori* judgements and combinations between judgements that he made remained very dominant. Particularly it was thought that he did a yeomen service in philosophy by so clearly distinguishing these types of knowledge and also clearly showing that a combination between synthetic and *a priori* judgement is a reality which was considered before him impossible. It is indeed an uphill task to prove this point and almost for a decade he made intense effort under strict regimentation in life to prove his point. By and large Kant's effort was acknowledged in philosophy and will perhaps his seminal contribution will influence philosophical thinking in the centuries to come.

However, raising questions in philosophy constitutes its essence. Kantian views had met with similar fate. With the passage of time philosophers, circles began to find flaws with his views and his views had been subjected to scrutiny. Some criticized him, some came forward to defend him. However, in this cudgels of their brains the center of attention was our Konigsberg philosopher. We hold so because it was he who had been criticized, again it was he who had been defended. It only shows that he did something significant that cannot be contemptuously or summarily rejected. It amounts to saying that whether other philosophers agreed with him or not his significant contributions they must take note of. In the concluding chapter, i. e. **chapter five** we set to do that.

Out of the philosopher I chose to bring under the ambit of discussion were logical positivists, W. V. O. Quine, Rudolf Carnap (one prominent logical positivist) Hillary Putnam, and Saul A. Kripke. We knew that the canvas was huge and hence I had to delimit the area. Out of these critics it is Quine who went berserk. It was so devastating that some prominent scholars came forward in defense of Kant. Let us begin with logical positivists.

Logical positivists gave their view over hundred years later of Kant's passing away. Within this long span of time and fast changes that world witnessed in the world of ideas and in physical world armed them with new instruments of

thought. Equipped with these they criticized Kant but not dismissed him. It is true that they disagreed with Kant about the feasibility of synthetic *a priori* knowledge as Moritz Schlick, a prominent member of the circle, clearly said it is a logical impossibility. As philosophy of language was in rise at that time and Ludwig Wittgenstein being there main source of inspiration, we find echo of these in positivists' view. They argued that what are called necessary statements are in fact reports of linguistic usage which represent our conventions. Furthermore, they are analytic (and here they go contrary to Kant's view) and do not contain any factual content. A. J. Ayer held in his *Language, Truth and Logic* that only analytic propositions can be necessary. Necessary propositions express relations between our ideas and meanings and not relations between things. Even mathematical propositions they held to be analytic. By and large we can say that the positivist circle did not accept Kant's newly discovered combination and thought in a way which was quite different from Kant.

W. V. O. Quine, another influential contemporary philosopher, not only refused to accept the combination (synthetic *a priori*) of Kant. He rather made a scathing attack of Kant's analytic-synthetic contrast and showed the impossibility of analytic judgement. His analysis and substantiation are lengthy but penetrative. We discussed his arguments at length. Though Quine did not directly criticize Kant's synthetic *a priori* combination his view about analyticity actually demolished this structure. It is so as impossibility of analyticity does not allow us to distinguish between analytic and synthetic knowledge and if it is so the question of combining synthetic with *a priori* judgement becomes unnecessary and irrelevant. We have also discussed about Quine's own scheme of sentence holism and his espousal of behaviouristic theory of meaning.

Reading of Quine's 'Two Dogmas of empiricism' and some other writings of him shook my many beliefs. I began to think what were the core points where these two stalwarts of philosophy were at loggerheads and what led them to such a bizarre tangle. In a section soon after discussion of Quine's view I tried to excavate

that. I made an attempt to show that new methodology, i. e. analytical method, with which Quine was equipped helped him to analyse Kant's view in a way that conveyed something that Kant did not intend. In other words, it took away the spirit of Kantian distinction.

Then I moved to Paul Grice and P. F. Strawson's defense of Kant's view. They showed that there might be scope for further improvement of Kantian distinction but this does not warrant rejection of distinction. Even they went to the extent of showing that there is scope to show that the distinction fit well within the scheme of Quine's own philosophy.

Rudolf Carnap, one close associate of Quine, could not agree with Quine in his view about analyticity. I have been given to understand that Carnap realized that analyticity when defined in natural language might run into rough weather. Hence he made attempt to define it (i. e. analyticity) in the framework of artificial language. From this endeavour of Carnap we can deduce that Carnap could fathom the necessity of analytic-synthetic distinction and he was determined to save the notion of analyticity.

Hilary Putnam, another major figure in analytic philosophy, strived to show that Quine's target was not only the notion of analyticity. In addition to that he targeted *a prioricity* also. He also held that Quine's argument was not sound. Though Putnam expressed his misgivings about the notion of *a prioricity* still he thinks that contextual *a prioricity* does indeed exist. Thus the difference between two Harvard philosophers come to the foreground.

Saul Kripke 1970's monograph *Naming and Necessity* is another important work where Kant's notion and his association of certain characteristics with *a prioricity* and *a posterioricity* has been subjected to hair-splitting scrutiny. In his work he showed that Kant's view that *a prioricity*, and not *a posterioricity*, without exception is the seat of necessity. Showing this view as mistaken he took examples from daily life and attempted to exhibit how *a posteriori* knowledge can

also contain necessity. These counterexamples of course shattered the equation that Kant made between necessity and *a prioricity*. Again he sowed the seeds of distinction between metaphysical necessity and epistemological necessity. Kripke's rigorous analysis actually untwined so many threads that his predecessors merged into one. Extrication of these strands was a spectacular achievement in philosophy. We have discussed the points that Kripke elaborated in his aforesaid work.

In the final portion I have given some impression of mine under the heading 'concluding remarks'. I felt during the entire course of discussion that Kant strove to prove in his long arduous journey how synthetic *a priori* knowledge significantly contribute or make our knowledge possible. It is true that it can be subjected to further scrutiny and which of course we must appreciate. But using new tool if any scholar tries to show that Kant's effort was inefficacious, it is hardly acceptable. Needless to say new efforts will bring further clarity and new results. But newer efforts and newer results are founded on older one. If we undermine that edifice, it will be a sheer tragedy.
