

Unit- IV

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Date:

Answer the following questions:-

1. Are Synthetic Judgements *A priori* or *A posteriori*? Give reasons.

Ans: (An analysis of knowledge in mathematics and physics reveals that it consists of Synthetic judgements *a priori*.) (Now this important phrase in relation to which Kant's epistemology has been developed, requires very careful explanation.)

A proposition is said to be analytic when its predicate is already contained in the connotation of the subject. For example; "All bodies are extended". If we understand the meaning of the term 'material body' whose connotation was taken by Descartes, Spinoza and Leibnitz to be extension, then certainly the predicate 'extended' is already contained in the subject.

(A Synthetic proposition is one in which the predicate does not belong to the subject either as its parts or whole), e.g; 'Material bodies are heavy'. Whether a body is heavy or not is known through experience.

Again, a proposition is said to be a *a priori* when it is independent of any experience whatever. Necessity and strict universality are the two criteria of a *a priori* propositions and

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both of these criteria are inseparable. By 'Strict universality' is meant 'true in all possible worlds'. A posteriori propositions are those which are possible through experience.

Kant does not take pains to distinguish an analytic from a priori proposition. However, it is clear that for him a priori necessity is different from analytic necessity. Again, a posteriori propositions are all Synthetic. But Kant would not maintain that all Synthetic propositions are a posteriori. According to Kant there are propositions which are a priori and yet which add to knowledge. Again a priori proposition may have a predicate which is not contained in the connotation of the subject.

For most of the empiricists a priori and the analytic propositions, and, a posteriori and the Synthetic propositions are identical. For Kant, as noted earlier, Synthetic propositions instead of being a posteriori may be a priori. For the empiricists in general, they are absurd and self-contradictory, and consequently nonsense. For Kant, however, Synthetic propositions a priori are most significant in scientific cognition and are found in mathematics and in Physics.

② Explain the Concept of Transcendental Deduction.

Ans: A factual proposition is based on experience is quite obvious and Kant did accept this contention of the empiricist. However, that there are a priori or universal and necessary elements involved in any empirical knowledge is a crucial point raised by Kant. According to Kant, any epistemology should have occupied itself with the enquiry of a priori elements involved in knowledge. These elements are independent of any experience whatsoever. Nay, indeed they are the preconditions of any cognitive experience whatsoever. Unless these a priori elements be operative, no experience of any object would arise at all. So Kant is not so much concerned with any specific objects of knowledge as with the universal or a priori ways of knowing any object. Hence, Kant has called his epistemological enquiry Transcendental. There are three modes in which the mind proceeds for ordering any empirical knowledge. In the first instance, discrete sensations have to be organised further into space and time to give rise to percepts. These percepts have to be organised further still by the twelve categories of the understanding in order to give rise to judgements. Percepts and Concepts joined together yield

empirical knowledge proper. A further process of Synthesis is effected a priori by the three ideas of Reason, namely, the world, soul and God. However, these ideas are regulative only and concerning them no knowledge is possible. This conclusion of Kant, concerning supersensible and metaphysical entities is known as Agnosticism.

According to the transcendental philosophy of Kant only those objects are known which lend themselves to human forms of knowing. Naturally objects of knowledge would be transfigured and transformed by these a priori forms of human knowing. Therefore, Kant maintains that we can know objects only as they appear to us, coloured and transformed by our ways of knowing. What these objects are in themselves apart from our way of knowing, of course, can never be ascertained by us. Hence, according to Kant, knowledge of the phenomena alone is possible; noumena or the things-in-themselves remain unknown and unknowable.

3. Explain Kant's Concept of Categories of Understanding.

Ans: According to Kant knowledge presupposes a thinking mind. Again, we can not think without having something to think about (Things in themselves or Noumena). And we can have no object of thought unless it is given through the senses, unless the mind is receptive or has 'Sensibility' or the quality of being sensible.

Objects or Things in themselves produces different sensations in our mind. These sensations are called by Kant 'the many fold of intuitions'. Sensibility receives these different discrete sensations. Not only this, it is also reacts upon them and imprints on them its a priori or innate forms viz; Space and Time. Kant calls them the forms of intuition.

These sensations, though received and arranged in space and time by the Sensibility are not knowledge. They are only the raw materials of knowledge. They are mere unrelated, disconnected percepts. To be knowledge they must be related or connected, conceived or thought by a Synthetic thinking mind; i.e; by understanding. Sensibility is receptive, but understanding is active. The forms of Sensibility are intuitional; the understanding however is Conceptual; it thinks in concepts. The understanding has different forms

of conceiving, relating or connecting percepts. They are called pure concepts or categories of the understanding. The categories of understanding such as substance, causality, unity, plurality etc are a priori and not derived from experience. Through sensibility or percepts, objects are given to us and through categories of understanding or concepts they are thought. So neither of the two faculties is of itself sufficient for the attainment of knowledge. In one, form and order are wanting and in the other, materials to be formed and ordered. According to Kant, 'percepts without concepts are blind (formless, unintelligible) and concepts without percepts are empty (without content)'.

In this way after thorough and critical analysis of the nature of percepts and concepts - sensibility and understanding, Kant came to the conclusion that knowledge would be impossible without the co-operation of sensation and perception on the one hand, and thinking and understanding on the other. In his view, rationalists and empiricists, alike, failed to realize the necessity for co-operation between these two. True knowledge can arise only from their union or co-operation. These two pre-conditions are fundamentally different but supplement each other

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Sensations arranged in space and time, and subsumed under categories of understanding are, again, co-ordinated by reason according to its regulative ideas of World, Soul and God. All our knowledge, according to Kant, begins with senses, proceeds then to the understanding and ends with reason.

But knowledge obtained in this way, according to Kant, are confined to phenomena or appearances only. Noumena or Things-in-themselves are unknown and unknowable. They are beyond the limit of our knowledge.

CRITICISM: Kant established his critical theory of knowledge after critical analysis of the merits and demerits of both rationalism and empiricism. So, his theory is free from dogmatism and one sidedness. He reconciled empiricism with rationalism. For this reason it seems to be more satisfactory theory than the other two.

But minute observation reveals that Kant's critical theory, though though critical, is not above criticism:

- (i) Firstly, according to Kant knowledge arises by the co-operation of matters and forms - percepts and concepts. They are fundamentally different from each other. Matter of knowledge comes from without whereas

forms of knowledge from within.
How can these two foreign
factors can supplant each other?
How can they co-operate with
each other to construct knowledge?

- (2) Secondly, according to Kant the categories of understanding are not applicable to 'Things-in-themselves' or noumena. Causality or Causal relation is one of the categories of understanding. Yet, Kant applies this category to Things-in-themselves when he says they are the causes of sensations.