


UDC: 7203.01

LBC: 63.3(2)6-7; 65.497; 71; 71.1

MJ № 312

 10.33864/2617-751X.2025.v8.i5.65-77

CRITICAL PHILOSOPHY AND THE CONDITIONS OF LEGITIMATE PHILOSOPHY ACCORDING TO KANT

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Abstract. The purpose of this research is not only to move beyond traditional concepts of knowledge but also to emphasize the significance of Kant's critical philosophy. This philosophical approach constructs knowledge on critical foundations and can significantly contribute to the development of human understanding. The study concludes that the human mind has clear boundaries. If these boundaries are exceeded, both certainty and truth may be compromised. If we examine closely many of the great discoveries made by humanity's most brilliant minds in the fields of science, philosophy, and art, we notice something striking. These discoveries often possess simplicity, clarity, or an intuitive quality. At the same time, it is surprising that humanity took so long to uncover such straightforward facts and obvious evidence. One such revelation may be the critique of reason itself. We might wonder how humanity spent centuries before any philosopher proposed that the human mind should be examined and tested. Why did no one argue earlier for the need to assess the mind's ability to know before using it as a tool to seek truth? This was precisely the work undertaken by Immanuel Kant (1724-1804). He critically examined the "human mind" before relying on it to explore theological, metaphysical, and hidden truths. His "critical philosophy" began as a systematic effort to define the exact boundaries within which the mind can be reliably used as a source of knowledge. According to Zakaria Ibrahim (1972), critical philosophy is, at its core, a methodical attempt to establish the legitimate limits of the mind's role in the pursuit of knowledge.

Keywords: Critical philosophy, Knowledge, Epistemology, Critical problem, Transcendental knowledge

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To cite this article: Bendoukha, H., & Ziat, F. [2025]. CRITICAL PHILOSOPHY AND THE CONDITIONS OF LEGITIMATE PHILOSOPHY ACCORDING TO KANT. "Metafizika" journal, 8(5), pp.65-77.

<https://doi.org/10.33864/2617-751X.2025.v8.i5.65-77>

Article history:

Received: 15.06.2025

Accepted: 04.08.2025




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КРИТИЧЕСКАЯ ФИЛОСОФИЯ И УСЛОВИЯ ЛЕГИТИМНОЙ ФИЛОСОФИИ ПО КАНТУ

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Абстракт. Цель данного исследования- не только преодолеть традиционные представления о знании, но и подчеркнуть важность критической философии Канта. Этот философский подход строит знание на критических основах и может значительно способствовать развитию человеческого понимания. Исследование приходит к выводу, что человеческий разум имеет чёткие границы. Если эти границы будут превышены, то и достоверность, и истина могут оказаться под угрозой. Если внимательно рассмотреть многие великие открытия, сделанные гениальными умами человечества в науке, философии и искусстве, можно заметить нечто удивительное. Эти открытия часто отличаются простотой, ясностью или интуитивной очевидностью. Однако удивительно то, что человечеству потребовались века, чтобы прийти к столь очевидным и простым истинам. Одним из таких открытий можно считать критический анализ самого разума. Возникает вопрос: почему человечество столетиями не предлагало подвергнуть человеческий разум проверке до того, как использовать его как инструмент поиска истины? Почему никто раньше не настаивал на необходимости оценить способность ума к познанию, прежде чем доверять ему? Именно этим занялся Иммануил Кант (1724-1804). Он подверг человеческий разум критическому анализу, прежде чем использовать его для исследования теологических, метафизических и сокровенных истин. Его «критическая философия» стала систематической попыткой определить точные пределы, в которых разум может быть надёжным источником знания. По мнению Закарии Ибрахима (1972), критическая философия по своей сути представляет собой методологическую попытку установить законные границы роли разума в поиске истины.

Ключевые слова: критическая философия, знание, эпистемология, критическая проблема, трансцендентальное знание

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Цитировать статью: Бендуха, Х., & Зиат, Ф. [2025]. КРИТИЧЕСКАЯ ФИЛОСОФИЯ И УСЛОВИЯ ЛЕГИТИМНОЙ ФИЛОСОФИИ ПО КАНТУ. *Журнал «Metafizika»*, 8(5), с.65-77.

<https://doi.org/10.33864/2617-751X.2025.v8.i5.65-77>

История статьи:

Статья поступила в редакцию: 15.06.2025

Отправлена на доработку: 14.07.2025

Принята для печати: 04.08.2025




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KRİTİK FƏLSƏFƏ VƏ KANTIN BAXIŞINA GÖRƏ QANUNI FƏLSƏFƏNİN ŞƏRTLƏRİ

Hişəm Benduxa*

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Abstrakt. Bu araşdırmanın məqsədi yalnızca bilik haqqında ənənəvi anlayışları aşmaq deyil, həm də Kantın kritik fəlsəfəsinin əhəmiyyətini vurğulamaqdır. Bu fəlsəfi yanaşma, bilik anlayışını tənqidi əsaslar üzərində qurur və insan anlayışının inkişafına mühüm töhfə verə bilər. Tədqiqatın nəticələri göstərir ki, insan zehninə aydın sərhədləri mövcuddur. Əgər bu sərhədlər aşılırsa, həm əminlik, həm də həqiqət təhlükə altına düşə bilər. Elm, fəlsəfə və incəsənət sahələrində bəşəriyyətin ən parlaq zehinlərinin kəşf etdiyi böyük nailiyyətlərə diqqətlə baxsaq, maraqlı bir cəhəti görə bilərik: bu kəşflər çox vaxt sadəlik, aydınlıq və ya intuisiya ilə xarakterizə olunur. Eyni zamanda təəccüblüdür ki, insanlıq bu cür açıq və aydın həqiqətləri kəşf etmək üçün nə qədər uzun müddət gözləməli olub. Bu açıqlamalardan biri də zehniyyətin özünün tənqidi ola bilər. Biz soruşa bilərik: niyə insanlıq əsrlər boyu heç bir filosofun insan zehninə əvvəlcə yoxlanılması və qiymətləndirilməsi lazım olduğunu irəli sürmədiyi bir dövr keçirdi? Niyə heç kim zehnin gerçəkliyi araşdırmaq üçün bir vasitə kimi istifadəsindən əvvəl onun biliyə qadir olub-olmadığını ölçmək lazım olduğunu düşünmədi? Məhz bu işi İmmanuel Kant (1724-1804) gördü. O, teoloji, metafizik və gizli həqiqətləri araşdırmazdan əvvəl, "insan zehni" tənqidi baxışla araşdırdı. Onun "kritik fəlsəfəsi", zehnin etibarlı şəkildə bilik mənbəyi kimi istifadə oluna biləcəyi dəqiq sərhədləri müəyyənləşdirmək üçün sistemli bir cəhd kimi başladı. Zəkəriyyə İbrahimə (1972) görə, kritik fəlsəfə mahiyyət etibarilə zehnin bilik axtarışındakı qanuni rolunun sərhədlərini müəyyənləşdirmək üçün metodik bir təşəbbüsdür.

Açar sözlər: Kritik fəlsəfə, Bilik, Epistemologiya, Tənqidi problem, Transsendental bilik

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Məqaləyə istinad: Benduxa, H., & Ziat, F. [2025] KRİTİK FƏLSƏFƏ VƏ KANTIN BAXIŞINA GÖRƏ QANUNI FƏLSƏFƏNİN ŞƏRTLƏRİ. "Metafizika" jurnalı, 8(5), səh.65-77.

<https://doi.org/10.33864/2617-751X.2025.v8.i5.65-77>

Məqalənin tarixçəsi:

Məqalə redaksiyaya daxil olmuşdur: 15.06.2025

Təkrar işlənməyə göndərilmişdir: 14.07.2025

Çapa qəbul edilmişdir: 04.08.2025



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1.Introduction

What makes the study of Kant's philosophy particularly challenging is not the lack of interest it inspires, but the difficulty of approaching it directly. It is often not effective to begin by reading Kant's original works immediately. Instead, it is more helpful to first read what others have written about him. Only after gaining that background should we turn to his own writings. This is because his texts are not known for being easy or clear to read (Mahmoud, 1936, p.249).

As suggested by Will Durant, it is wise to first understand Kant through interpreters who can clarify his thought before engaging with his original texts (Durant, 1985, pp.315-316).

This approach becomes especially important when we consider Kant's own definition of "enlightenment". He described it as the process through which a person frees themselves from irrationality. Specifically, this irrationality is the inability to use one's own reason without relying on others. For Kant, enlightenment means using reason freely and independently, without being subjected to external pressure or influence.

1.1.Objective of the Study

The aim of this research is not only to present Kant's critical problem. Rather, it seeks to demonstrate the importance, nature, and challenges of critical philosophy. This includes exploring its origins in Kant's investigation into the nature and limits of human knowledge. The study also aims to highlight how this philosophical inquiry influences science and the development of human understanding, using an epistemological framework.

1.2.Problem of the Study

Based on the above, the central research problem can be summarized through the following key questions:

Can the concept of transcendental knowledge be properly introduced through Kant's philosophy? What is the nature of the problem within critical philosophy? How does this problem influence Kant's theory of knowledge? Finally, is it possible to resolve the tension between reason and experience through an epistemological study?

1.3.Significance of the Study

This research gains its importance from the exploration of Kant's theory of knowledge, particularly his idea of transcendental knowledge. By examining the philosophical challenges faced by both rationalist and empiricist thinkers, the study aims to offer an epistemological perspective that addresses and potentially resolves these challenges. This contributes to deeper insights into the foundations of human knowledge.

1.4.Methodology

This study adopts a historical approach to trace the development of rational and empirical science from ancient times. In addition, it applies an analytical and descriptive epistemological method. This involves collecting, analyzing, and critically interpreting relevant information, then drawing conclusions through an epistemological lens.

2.The Critical Problem

Immanuel Kant sent a copy of his book *The Critique of Pure Reason* (1781) to his friend Marcus Herz. In this major work, Kant aimed to clarify the types of knowledge possible in mathematics, natural science, and metaphysics. Herz, who was deeply engaged in philosophical studies and known for his reflective thinking, attempted to read the book. However, he could only get halfway through it before returning it to Kant. Herz expressed concern for his mental well-being, stating that he feared he would go insane if he continued reading (see Zidan, 1968, pp.-72-73).

This reaction, coming from someone experienced in philosophy, is noteworthy. If a professional philosopher like Herz struggled with Kant's writing, it raises an important question: how should others with less philosophical background approach it?

Understanding Kant requires a specific mindset. According to Lalande, critique is "considering the value of the thing; it is a test of the mind, the critical spirit. It is he who does not accept any confession without interfering with the value of that confession" (Lalande, *Vocabulaire technique et critique de la philosophie*, 1st ed., p.237). This definition captures the essence of Kant's critical method, which emphasizes rational inquiry and the careful examination of claims.

Thus, it is essential to approach Kant's philosophy with vigilance and caution. Rather than starting from the central arguments- which can be dense and difficult- it is wiser to begin with peripheral ideas or secondary sources that explain his thought in simpler terms.

Philosophy, as Kant understood it, is neither about immediate affirmation nor denial. It is a process of questioning and investigation. In this light, Kantian criticism represents philosophy at its core. It is rooted in the critical task of evaluating the capacities and limits of human reason itself (Ibrahim, 1972, p.14).

When Kant refers to "critique", he does not mean the critique of books or philosophical doctrines in the traditional sense. Rather, he means the critique of *reason itself*, especially regarding the kind of knowledge it seeks independently of experience. In this context, Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason* (1781) is an investigation into the human capacity for metaphysical knowledge- knowledge that transcends experience (Kant, 1781/2004, pp.26-27).

The main concern of Kantian critique, therefore, is to assess the possibility or impossibility of metaphysics in general. This inquiry is not merely speculative; it is based on determining the origin, scope, and boundaries of metaphysical knowledge using clear rational principles (Zidan, 2004, p.41).

Kant expresses this aim in his own words:

I do not mean by this the critique of books and philosophical systems, but the critique of the faculty of reason in general, with regard to all knowledge that it seeks independently of experience. Thus, this critique will determine the possibility or impossibility of metaphysics in general, and will determine its sources, scope, and limits, all of this according to principles (Kant, 1781/2004, pp.26-27).

3.Kant's Critical Philosophy

Kant, like John Locke (1632-1704) and David Hume (1711-1776), sought to investigate the sources of human knowledge and to examine the faculties and capacities of the human mind. However, he diverged fundamentally from both. While Locke and Hume adopted a psychological approach to analyzing the operations of sensation and thought- reducing complex ideas to simpler, foundational elements- Kant began with the quest for certainty. He was searching for knowledge that could not be grounded in psychological processes but rather must stand independently, based on a transcendental foundation.

Kant's mission was to formulate a new theory of the human mind, one capable of accounting for the achievements of science and metaphysics alike. To comprehend this new theory, one must understand the three primary faculties of the human mind as conceptualized by Kant:

1. Cognition (Perception and Understanding)
2. Will (Practical Reason)
3. Feeling (Aesthetic Judgment)

Each of these faculties corresponds to one of Kant's **three critical works**:

1. Critique of Pure Reason (1781) – Concerned with the faculty of knowledge or understanding.
2. Critique of Practical Reason (1788) – Focused on the faculty of the will, addressing moral law and ethical behavior.
3. Critique of the Power of Judgment (1790) – Dedicated to the faculty of feeling, specifically aesthetic and teleological judgments.

Thus, Kant's critical philosophy is built upon the systematic analysis of these three faculties: mind, will, and feeling, each explored in its respective *Critique* (Muhammad Ali Abu Rayan, *History of Philosophical Thought: Modern Philosophy*, Dar Al-Maarefa Al-Jameya Publishing House, Beirut, n.d.).

Historians of philosophy have long regarded the critical question as synonymous with epistemology, since its primary function is to examine reason and assess its capacity for knowledge. However, Kant expanded the

scope of critical philosophy beyond this initial framework. He formulated around three fundamental questions:

1. **What can I know?**
2. **What can I do?**
3. **What may I hope?**

According to Kant, these three questions represent the central concerns of the human mind. Respectively, they address the problem of knowledge, the moral problem, and the religious problem. The first is the domain of the theoretical mind, the second pertains to the practical mind, and the third incorporates both theoretical and practical dimensions.

At the time of formulating these questions, Kant had not yet introduced the third faculty of the human self- the faculty of aesthetic judgment or moral conscience- which he would later explore in depth in his third critical work, the Critique of the Power of Judgment (1790).

Through these inquiries, critical philosophy aims to encompass and organize the various fields of human knowledge, positioning itself not merely as a philosophical method but as a comprehensive framework for understanding the mind and its operations (Zakaria Ibrahim, op. cit., p.46).

4. The Three Fundamental Problems:

The origin of critical philosophy lies in Kant's central question concerning the nature, value, and limits of human knowledge, as well as its relation to existence. As previously noted, Kant viewed this question as essential for anyone seeking to employ reason in the acquisition of knowledge. In other words, we must first examine the tool of knowledge- our reason- before placing trust in it or relying upon it. This compels us to ask a necessary foundational question: What are the basic premises upon which Kantian philosophy was constructed? What is the origin of the development of the critical problem? (Zakaria Ibrahim, op. cit., p.46).

Two things stood firm in Kant's mind- science and morality- which he regarded as indisputable facts. With respect to morality, which he saw as inseparable from religion, it appeared to him as a given truth that could not be refuted through inference. Indeed, he often quoted the lines of the Roman poet Juvenal to underscore his moral stance: *"Believe me, the most heinous sins are to affect living on honor, and to sacrifice the principles of behavior in the interest of life"*.

For Kant, existence itself is not the direct subject of philosophy. Rather, philosophy's subject matter is science and ethics, whose very presence forms the point of departure for philosophical inquiry. Thus, Kant does not ask whether science and morality are possible, but rather: **How did science and morality come into being? What are their origins? How can we explain their existence?**

There are, in Kant's view, two concrete realities that philosophy can investigate: science and ethics. Their existence is unquestionable, but the fundamental challenge lies in reconciling the two. Science and ethics are, by nature, heterogeneous: science is rooted in mathematical principles and empirical validation, whereas ethics is grounded in freedom, duty, and the moral law, which are not reducible to empirical or calculative terms. This tension between the deterministic framework of science and the freedom-based foundation of morality is what gives rise to one of the core critical problems in Kant's philosophy.

Kant subjected the mind itself to critical scrutiny and, through this, proposed a new approach that crystallized clearly in his thought. To fully understand his proposed approach, we must examine his cognitive theory, which will be addressed in the second section of this chapter. Kant's philosophical revolution is often compared to the astronomical revolution initiated by Nicolas Copernicus (1473–1543 AD), the priest, physician, and astronomer born in Toruń, Poland, who famously declared that “the sun is the center of the universe” rather than the Earth (Sharaf & Qasim, n.d., pp.31-34)

In a similar vein, Kant shifted the focus of philosophy by asserting that the mind itself is the center around which knowledge and perception revolve, rather than knowledge simply conforming to external objects as was traditionally believed. To clarify and defend this doctrine, Kant wrote the work titled *An introduction to Every Future Metaphysics That Wants to Be a Science* (1783) highlights the foundational aspects of Kant's critical project (Karam, 1982, p.213; Potro, n.d., pp.49-56; Ibrahim, n.d., p.77).

5. Historical Significance of the Monetary Problem

The monetary problem holds historical importance in several respects:

First, Kant's critical philosophy arose as a response to the conflict between rationalism and empiricism. Kant's thought represents an effort by the human mind to reconcile these two opposing currents within philosophy. This reconciliation will be discussed further in the second section of this chapter (Abdel Muti, n.d., p.222).

Both rationalism and empiricism encountered serious difficulties which neither school could resolve. Kant questioned whether the philosophical problem itself had been misplaced, or if it was an illusion to assume a definite connection between the mind and things as they exist independently outside it. Kant's philosophy emerged from this profound philosophical drama between the rationalists and empiricists during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries (Emile Potro, op. cit., p.18).

Second, Kant's philosophy served as the starting point for German philosophy, particularly concerning the explanation of the possibility of science of nature (Naturwissenschaft). Although Kant opposed categorical

idealism derived purely from the laws of thought and existence, such idealism nevertheless originates from his system. The historical significance of Kant’s philosophy in this context is undeniable.

Third, Kant’s philosophy in general holds a historical value as the foundation of all critical philosophies that have played a significant role in the history of modern thought and continue to influence contemporary philosophy (Emile Potro, op. cit., p.18).

6.Reason and Experience: The Reconciliation and the Transcendental Knowledge Project

Kant’s dual critical attitude emerged from his careful observation of the two dominant philosophical currents of his time: rationalism and empiricism. Both sought to develop a comprehensive theory of knowledge, yet each ended up refuting the other. Kant went beyond this insight to reveal the arbitrariness and exaggerations in the assumptions underlying each current, exposing how each relied on premises whose correctness was often taken for granted without sufficient justification.

Kant’s critique showed that rationalist philosophy (or mental philosophy) often exceeded the limits of reason by claiming to prove entities beyond experience- such as God, human freedom, and the immortality of the soul- entities that are, by their nature, not accessible to sensory experience. Conversely, empiricism limited itself strictly to the data of sensory experience and failed to recognize the existence of transcendental principles- the necessary cognitive frameworks or conditions that structure sensory data into coherent perceptions (E. Kant, trans. Moses & Hiba, n.d., pp.48-49; M. F. Zidan, 2nd ed., n.d., pp.68-69)

In light of this contradiction between hypotheses and their results, Kant identified a special category of judgments, which he termed “synthetic a priori judgments” (sometimes here referred to as “tribal synthetic judgments”). These judgments are synthetic because their predicate is not contained in their subject (their motivation goes beyond mere definition), and a priori because they are not derived from experience (Abdul Rahman Badawi, *Emmanuel Kant*, op. cit., pp.184-185). Kant posed a crucial question: How are synthetic a priori judgments possible?

Kant’s solution was that human knowledge depends on cognitive structures that are not empirical in origin but are rooted in the human mind itself. While all knowledge begins with experience, it does not necessarily arise from experience. Sensory experience provides raw, fragmented data- colors, lights, textures, sounds- yet the mind, through innate frameworks embedded in its nature, organizes, arranges, and synthesizes this data into meaningful perceptions of objects.

Thus, the mind actively structures separate and unordered sensory impressions into unified, coherent experiences. Without this mental activity, sensory input would remain an incomprehensible and chaotic mixture (Abdul Rahman Badawi, *Encyclopedia of Philosophers*, Part II, Arab Foundation for Studies, Publishing and Distribution, Beirut, Lebanon, 1st Edition, 1984, pp. 169-170).

Since Kant's philosophy is grounded in images, structures, and entities, it is important to clarify the systematic procedural function carried out by transcendental knowledge, as this relates directly to the notion of synthetic a priori judgments (referred to here as "tribal judgments") that Kant discovered. Kant himself states:

"My interest is transcendental; all knowledge is not concerned so much with the objects themselves as with the way we come to know those objects. This way of knowing must be possible *a priori*". (Badawi, 1984, p.170)

Badawi (1917–2002) comments on this by explaining: "*The transcendental precedes experience but belongs to the realm of reason. Transcendental knowledge is completely free of sensory elements. The transcendental principle represents all the general conditions a priori by which alone things can become objects. Transcendental philosophy is the science of the possibility of synthetic a priori knowledge. It does not investigate particular objects but rather the origins and limits from which knowledge arises. It is a systematic science that presents, in a synthetic and necessary way, the objects of pure reason. It belongs to theoretical metaphysics, and its main question is: How can synthetic a priori judgments exist?*" (Zakaria Ibrahim, op. cit., p.79)

In Kant's philosophy, "concepts" or "perceptions"- as one of the fundamental categories- hold a critical position. They serve as the necessary links between the subject and its object, bridging the existence of things and their mental representations. Concepts allow humans to grasp objects by mediating between what exists externally and what is perceived internally.

Kant moves beyond the dualism of the sensory given and the mental by seeking a middle ground. He elevates "understanding" as the faculty that connects sensory intuition with mental perception, making sensitivity and understanding complementary functions:

- **Sensitivity** supplies the raw material of knowledge (sensory data).
- **Understanding** shapes and organizes this material into coherent images or concepts.

Without sensitivity, knowledge would be subjectless; without understanding, it would be unreasonable. Hence, Kant famously asserts: "*Concepts without sensory intuitions are empty; sensory intuitions without concepts are blind*".

Neither understanding can function without sensory intuition, nor can sensitivity operate without mental perception. Yet, knowledge arises from their union, as it is this synthesis that transforms sensory perception into experience.

Therefore, human knowledge consists of two fundamental elements: the element of intuition (direct sensory input) and the element of mental perception (concepts). Neither alone suffices to generate knowledge independently of the other. Importantly, sensory data must be subsumed under mental concepts that provide the form and structure of judgment, thus preventing empirical judgments from attaining absolute or universal truth (Abdullah Ibrahim, *Western Centralism, The Problem of the Universe and Self-Centeredness*, Arab Cultural Center, Casablanca, Morocco, 1st Edition, 1997, pp. 93-94).

Kant affirms the objectivity of the external world, yet he insists that the laws of the mind only enable us to know phenomena- the world as it appears to us- in a manner that is inherently conditioned by our subjective frameworks. In other words, the “self-unity” or the transcendental unity of consciousness is the sole foundation of all knowledge. Consequently, the legitimate application of the mind’s categories is always grounded in experience, never imposed on it from above.

Thus, the primary categories or concepts can only be legitimately applied to objects of experience, those things produced and given through sensory perception. Applying these categories to transcendental objects- such as God or the soul- renders the concepts meaningless because outside the realm of sensory experience, these concepts lose their coherent reference and validity. For instance, asserting that God is or is not an “essence” is a meaningless judgment since the concept of “essence” has no reasonable meaning beyond the domain of sensory experience, which itself cannot access the absolute.

Kant’s project, especially regarding the formal deduction of the categories, aims to justify the laws of nature- a key concern in Newtonian physics. He strives to prove that there exist necessary connections between phenomena, not merely contingent or incidental ones based on isolated experience. These necessary connections are expressed through a priori categories, which the mind uses to link successive natural phenomena. Without the mind’s faculty to impose these conceptual categories, the idea of “nature” as a coherent system would be impossible.

In this framework, it is not required that all knowledge be founded on a set of absolute, self-evident principles. Rather, these fundamental principles- which Kant calls the “principles of pure understanding”- serve as the basic laws through which the mind organizes experience. They are necessary conditions for the possibility of knowledge but do not extend beyond the realm of possible experience (Ibrahim, n.d., pp.93-95).

In summary, Kant's philosophy can be recapped as follows: The empirical world is subjected to specific mental laws, while the claim that the mind can know anything beyond perceptible phenomena is rejected. The transcendental self, as the cornerstone of cognition, imparts mental content to the world by transforming sensory input into meaningful mental relations. It is this self that structures the world as it is known to us, reducing the mental content of the world to mere mental relations rather than to things-in-themselves (Bukhinsky, as cited in Elouafi, n.d., pp.32-51).

7. Conclusion

What concerns us today, as we live in an era where thought is strained and its effectiveness diminished, is the need to return to the Kantian project. This return should not be a matter of mere rumination or outright negation of Kant's philosophy, but rather a **rearrangement and reconfiguration** of his program in light of contemporary realities. Such a return must be guided by a **historical and critical engagement**- a dialectical approach that fully appreciates the **"double criticism"** Kant exemplified. This approach honors the theoretical achievements throughout the history of philosophy while maintaining a profound loyalty to the **theoretical vitality of human reason**, all without ignoring the contradictions and challenges of our current historical moment, both within and beyond our immediate context.

As Émile Poteau (1972) noted, the raw material Kant engaged with was not existence per se, but primarily the **theory of knowledge**. Kant's inquiry remained **within the boundaries of the mentally possible**, which granted his philosophy an idealistic character. By transcending the Newtonian physical system, he elevated its foundational concepts to a level of universality and necessity.

Therefore, a **return to Kantian heritage** is not only warranted but essential. In today's complex and often contradictory world, we truly need a thinker like Kant- who succeeded in his era despite formidable obstacles- to inspire renewed critical reflection and philosophical effectiveness.

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