

European Journal of  
**Philosophy, Culture and Religious Studies**  
(EJPCR)



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**Rev. Fr. Dr. Joseph T. Ekong, O.P, Ph.D**

Associate Professor of Philosophy, Dominican University, Ibadan

Emails: [fatherekong71@gmail.com](mailto:fatherekong71@gmail.com), [ekongop@dui.edu.ng](mailto:ekongop@dui.edu.ng)

### **Abstract**

**Purpose:** This work offers a caveat regarding the human propensity to error, even in situations of very meticulous and seemingly thorough philosophical investigations.

**Methodology:** This paper is a critical, analytic and evaluative, in its exposition of Kant's ontology.

**Findings:** Kant already had a theory of the origin of concepts which reinforced his theory of the nature of judgments. Based on his acceptance of the Cartesian psychology of perception, he claimed that man thinks only thoughts and perceives only perceptions; and that the mind is aware only of itself and its own states. The situation puts in relief what finally is an issue between a theory which is pinned to a belief in an absolute beyond history and behind experience, and one which is frankly experimental.

**Unique Contribution to theory, practice and policy (recommendation):** In a manner that is both instructive and corrective, this work contributes to the extant repertoire of discussions on Kant's ontology. It offers a significantly demanding ratiocinative interrogation of the foundations upon which Kant's theory of human transcendence was premised or predicated.

**Keywords:** *Human transcendence, Kant, theory, ontology, pitfalls.*

## 1.0 Introduction

### 1.1 The Nature of Kant's Ontology

Kant's metaphysics is difficult to distinguish from his epistemology. Since epistemological processes are possible based on *a priori* grounds and human reason (which is divine) is the faculty of transcendental ideas, it thus provides the pre-thematic or primordial condition that makes every epistemological, as well as metaphysical process possible. Taking a careful look at Kant's theory of transcendence, one can validly make the claim that his metaphysics (ontology) consists in a certain philosophical epistemology but one which transcends the bounds of experience. As Findlay (1981) points out:

Kant's theory of knowledge accepts the reality of a transcendental subject, and of transcendental acts which exist beyond experience and knowledge and are constitutive of it. It also accepts the reality of many transcendental objects which affect our subjectivity and which have characters and relations not given to the latter, and at best corresponding to phenomenal characters and relations.<sup>1</sup>

Kant claimed that his reading of Hume's epistemological writings "awakened him from his dogmatic slumbers." But, this is scarcely surprising because the period of enlightenment was an age of awakenings and it seems as if it is an age-long pose of philosophers to insist that the glare of the new truth they have discovered has altered their original perspective and perhaps even distresses them. In Plato's *Allegory of the Cave*, Socrates says:

And now look again and see what will naturally follow if the prisoners are released and disabused of their error. At first, when any of them is liberated and compelled to stand up and turn his neck around and walk and look towards the light, he will suffer sharp pains, the glare will distress him, and he will be unable to see the realities of which in his former state, he had seen only the shadows...<sup>2</sup>

Kant's analysis of knowledge was in fact an analysis of judgment and reasoning. In it we see him dwell on the four principal moments of human knowledge, (1) perception, (2) concept formation, (3) judgment, and (4) reasoning. And his major question was: How are judgments of a certain type possible? Kant already had a theory of the origin of concepts, which reinforced his theory of the nature of judgments; and based on his acceptance of the Cartesian psychology of perception, he claimed that man thinks only thoughts and perceives only perceptions; and that the mind is aware only of itself and its own states.<sup>3</sup> For Kant, the nature of the reality known is inseparable from the nature of the mind that knows it. Thus, in the second edition of the *Critique of Pure Reason*, he says:

Hitherto it has been assumed that all our knowledge must conform to objects. But all attempts [for instance, to account for the possibility of

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<sup>1</sup>J. N. Findlay, (1981), *Kant And The Transcendental Object: A Hermeneutic Study* (Oxford: Clarendon Press), p. x

<sup>2</sup> Plato's *Republic*, Book VII, 515c-515e.

<sup>3</sup> Cornelius Ryan and Henry Tiblier, *Epistemology*, (Milwaukee: The Bruce Publishing Company, 1967), p. 147

objective knowledge] have, on this assumption, ended in failure. We must therefore make trial whether we may not have more success in the tasks of metaphysics, if we suppose that objects conform to our knowledge.<sup>4</sup>

For Kant, this change in his metaphysical perspective is his “Copernican Revolution,”<sup>5</sup> resulting in transcendental idealism. His idealism was motivated by a variety of considerations. He believed that there were some basic principles and judgments which provide the foundation of our understanding of the universe, viz: “The truths of arithmetic, of geometry, the principle that every event has a cause, the judgment that objects never simply go out of existence; and likewise the judgment that objects never simply come into existence out of nothing.”<sup>6</sup> The knowledge we have of these kinds of truths, Kant termed “synthetic a priori,” and he felt that without this, no meaningful experience and understanding of knowledge would be possible. Also, this is not simply an experiential form of knowledge, but one that encodes the judgments and principles we adopt in making sense of our experience.<sup>7</sup> There is a wide range of opinions regarding the aim of Kant’s metaphysics, and each of those opinions could be considered valid, depending on what convincing and compelling arguments are offered to substantiate them. However, in a most profound way, Michael Kelvin (1970:5-6), presents a perspective on the purpose of Kant’s ontology, which is quite succinct and persuasive, and deserves to be re-echoed here. He says:

Kant’s ontology aims at demonstrating that finite human reason transcends the boundaries of scientific categorizing that occurs in physics and mathematics which both depend on the ability of the mind to distinguish between appearance and reality. Kant However was not just concerned with the possibility of mathematics and physics, but with

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<sup>4</sup> Immanuel Kant, (1929) *Critique of Pure Reason*, (trans. N.K. Smith), (London: Macmillan), B XVI.

<sup>5</sup> “Copernicus, a sixteenth-century astronomer, pointed out that the apparent motion of the Sun and stars had hitherto been assumed to be real motion: it was claimed that the reason the Sun appears to rise in the east, travel across the sky, and set in the west, is simply that it really is moving round a stationary earth. Copernicus, however, argued that precisely the same appearances would result if, instead, the Sun were in fact stationary and the Earth were spinning on its axis. Copernicus replaced the naïve, which took the apparent motion of the Sun to be real motion, with a theory according to which the apparent motion of the Sun is in effect a product of the real motion of the observer: it is because we are spinning that the Sun seems to move across the sky. Kant’s so-called Copernican revolution is analogous. It had hitherto been assumed that there appear to be spatio-temporal objects that exist independently of us because there really are such things. Kant replaced this naïve realism with a theory according to which the apparent nature and independence of the objective world is a product of our perceptions, concepts and judgments: in the last analysis, it is because we perceive and think as we do that the world seems to be as it is.” [Culled from Nicholas Bunnin and E.P. Tsui-James, (Eds.), *The Blackwell Companion to Philosophy*, 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition, (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing Company, 2003), p. 728

<sup>6</sup> Nicholas Bunnin and E.P. Tsui-James, (Eds.), *The Blackwell Companion To Philosophy*, p. 728

<sup>7</sup> Ibidem

the possibility of science in general. He resolved the problem by stating that science in general is possible due to the possibility of metaphysics itself which is ingrained in man and which depicts the autonomy of human thought to metaphysicize and hence, to as well scientificize. It is for this reason that Kant dubbed his brand of philosophy ‘transcendental idealism.’ But this transcendental perspective accommodates epistemological inquiries and forms the ground of human freedom and responsibility.<sup>8</sup>

A most significant contribution of Kant to philosophy consists in his "Copernican Revolution," for he claims that, it is the representation that makes the object possible, and not the object that makes the representation possible. But if the mind actively generates perception, this raises the question whether the result has anything to do with the world, or if so, how much? The answer to the question, unusual, ambiguous, or confusing as it would be, made for endless trouble both in Kant's thought and for a posterity trying to figure him out. To the extent that knowledge depends on the structure of the mind and not on the world, knowledge would have no connection to the world and is not even a true *representation*, but a solipsistic fantasy.<sup>9</sup> Here, Kant's epistemology seems threatened with "psychologism," (the doctrine that what we know is our own psychology, not external things). But, Kant did say, consistent with psychologism, that basically we don't know about "things-in-themselves," objects as they exist apart from perception; and that there are important features of *things-in-themselves* that we *do* have some notion of, and which are of fundamental importance to human life, not just morality.<sup>10</sup> These he called the three "Ideas" of reason: God, freedom, and immortality. Kant claimed that the rational structure of the mind reflected the rational structure of the world, even of things-in-themselves, and that the "operating system" of the processor, by modern analogy, matched the operating system of reality.<sup>11</sup> Also, Ted Honderich, in identifying the purpose of Kant's ontology, asserts that:

The central concern of Kant's greatest masterpiece, the *Critique of Pure Reason*, is with the possibility of metaphysics, understood as philosophical knowledge that transcends the bounds of experience. For Kant, such knowledge claims to be both *synthetic and a priori*. In other words, metaphysics purports to provide necessary truths, which, as such, cannot be based on empirical evidence (their apriority), but which also claim more of their referents than can be derived from an analysis of their concepts (their syntheticity). The propositions "God exist" and every event has a cause" are examples of such claims" The second aspect of Kant's concern with metaphysics is with the problem of the antinomies. As a result of his reflections on the concept of a world, he became convinced that reason inevitably falls into contradiction with itself when it endeavors to "think the whole", that is when it ventures

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<sup>8</sup> Michael Gelven, (1970), *A Commentary on Heidegger's Being and Time*, (New York, Evanston: Harper and Row), pp. 5-6.

<sup>9</sup> Immanuel Kant (1724-1804). Available at: <http://www.friesian.com/kant.htm>

<sup>10</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>11</sup> Ibidem.

beyond experience in order to answer such questions as whether the universe has a beginning in time, limit in space, or first cause, or is, rather infinite in these respects...He also thought that, if unresolved, the problem of the antinomies could lead to a hopeless skepticism, which he termed the 'euthanasia of pure reason.' Consequently, Kant came to see the 'fate of metaphysics' as crucially dependent on a successful resolution of the antinomies as well as an account of the possibility of *synthetic a priori* knowledge.<sup>12</sup>

For Kant, metaphysics is an attempt to know what lies beyond the scope of human sensory experience. It seeks to answer the question for which sense experience is incapable of providing answers, questions about the immortality of the soul, the existence of God, and freedom of the will. It offers a great deal of knowledge about these matters. In the attempt to provide the promised knowledge, however, the metaphysician employs the conceptual structures that underlie some controversial forms of knowledge: structures like those at work in talk about substances, causation, and events. A central criticism of Kant is that he lacks a proper psychology of experience. This lack, noted by Hegel and his successors, concerns the ontological and transcendental underpinnings of Kant's concepts of experience; the pure, transcendental, a priori nature of his categories. As Kant does not draw these from experience, Dewey criticizes him as producing a rift between the existentially real world and the perceiving knower. Dewey feels that Kant, in searching for a solution as to how to bring the two realms together, strikes upon the idea of a transcendental self. This self brings itself to bear upon sense-material through the categories of understanding. These categories are pure, a priori logical rules for the ordering of sensory material (intuitions). An experience is created when the two realms are conjoined. The ideal realm of the categories is parasitic upon the real realm of sensory material. And this poses a dilemma. For the categories to function in the construction of an experience, they must have *prima facie* an object at their disposal, and an idea of what the object should be that does not itself participate in the construction of the experience. They must, in short, have an idea of the object that is predetermined in its form. This, suggests Dewey, drives Kant to the conclusion that there must be a noumenal object that is not experienced, that serves as an ideal object for the construction of all possible objects in experience. But since the relevant structures yield knowledge only when they are applied to the raw data of sensory experience, the philosopher's use of those structures to answer the perennial questions of metaphysics, never delivers the knowledge the metaphysician promises us.

Given the way our cognitive machinery operates, the conditions required for knowledge can never be satisfied in the metaphysical case. Consequently, the claims the metaphysician wants to make, go beyond the limits of scientific knowledge in metaphysics. Kant makes a distinction between *transcendent metaphysics* and *critical metaphysics*. While the former seeks to characterize reality that transcends sensory experience, the latter has as its task, the delineation of the most general features of our thought and knowledge. It seeks to identify the most general concepts at work in our representation of the world, the relationships that obtain among those concepts, and the presuppositions of their objective employment. For Kant, just as the sensory contents or raw data of sense experience constitute an object of knowledge only when structured by the innate concepts,

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<sup>12</sup> Ted Honderich, (Ed.) *The Oxford Companion To Philosophy*, (1995), (Oxford: Oxford University Press), pp. 435-436.

the innate conceptual structures yield an object of knowledge only when they are applied to the sensory contents for which they provide principles of unity and organization.<sup>13</sup>

## 2.0 The Pitfalls in Kant's Ontology

Chiedozie Okoro<sup>14</sup>, in the third chapter of his unpublished doctoral dissertation, identifies a number of discrepancies in Kant's ontology, which are very enlightening, and deserve to be highlighted here. First, Kant's "distinction between the immanent employment of the pure concepts of understanding and the transcendent employment of the pure concepts of reason, denotes the demarcation often made between Kant's epistemology and metaphysics."<sup>15</sup> The consequence of this is to think that Kant's epistemology is empirical in its method, while his metaphysics is rationalistic, and this would be a misreading of Kant's transcendental philosophy. The problem in Kant's ontology is rather traceable to the misplacement of the function of faculties of the human mind. Okoro asserts:

By stating that the understanding represents pure concepts of pure reason for the instituting of transcendence, Kant invariably implies that pure understanding is the horizon of objectivity. This is exactly where the discrepancy and anomaly in Kant's ontology lie, that is, the usurpation or subsuming of the mediating and symbiotic functions of imagination under the faculty of pure understanding, in his effort to provide an ontological foundation for ontic knowledge...If in the 'Transcendental Deduction' Kant had outlined the imagination as the faculty that institutes objectivity and transcendence, why then did he reassign the same role to the understanding, in the 'Transcendental Dialectic'?<sup>16</sup>

Heidegger points out that the pitfall in Kant's metaphysics, arises from the "limitation of traditional metaphysics itself, which was the only source available to Kant."<sup>17</sup> Traditional metaphysics was limited in its theoretical foundation which was hinged on the theory of being. Eventually, even Kant's effort to reconstruct traditional metaphysics focused on the source of illusion and error in human thought, and the provision of a new and firm foundation for metaphysics. He felt that since it is the faculty of reason that judges, truth, error or illusion are all functions of judgment, and not of the senses, since the senses do not judge. Consequently, to "insure pure reason from error, he assigned the function of imagination to the understanding which as the 'subjective passage way (i.e. the subjective processes of consciousness) which institutes and objective ground' that is the production of pure concepts of understanding, for pure reason. This is how Kant created a pandora

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<sup>13</sup> Michael J. Loux, (1998) *Metaphysics, A Contemporary introduction*, 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition, (New York: Routledge), p.7

<sup>14</sup> Prof. Chiedozie Okoro is a lecturer in the Department of Philosophy, University of Lagos. He teaches Metaphysics, Phenomenology, Ontology, and Developmental Studies.

<sup>15</sup> Chiedozie Okoro, Unpublished Doctoral Dissertation, 2001, Chapter 3, p. 159

<sup>16</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>17</sup> Martin Heidegger, (1962) *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics*, (Bloomington, London: Indiana University Press), p. 9.

of confusion in his ontology.”<sup>18</sup> Also, Strawson, in making a critique of the obscurity in Kant’s doctrine of conscious experience (awareness), remarks that:

The doctrine that we are aware of things only as they appear and not as they are in themselves because their appearance to us are the result of our constitution being affected by the objects, is a doctrine that we can understand just so long as “affecting” is thought of as something that occurs in space and time; but when it is added that we are to understand by space and time nothing but a capacity or liability of ours to be affected in a certain way by objects not themselves in space and time, then we can no longer understand the doctrine, for we no longer know what “affecting” means, or what we are to understand by “ourselves.”<sup>19</sup>

Thirdly, Kant’s position regarding the *noumena* and phenomena, as well as the proper functions of the faculties of the mind, are seemingly confusing, in two of his works: *The Dreams of the Spirit Seer* and in his *Dissertation*. Whereas in the former, which was his attempt to re-build a spiritual metaphysics, he presents the “noumena” as knowable, in the latter he adopts a different position, presenting the intuition (or sensibility) as capable of apprehending the *phenomena*, and the understanding as capable of apprehending things as they are in themselves.<sup>20</sup> But, in the first edition of his *Critique of Pure Reason*, he goes back to his earlier position in the *Dreams of the Spirit Seer*, except that he rather presents the *noumena* as completely unknowable.

Also, the role of imagination as the institutor of transcendence and objectivity in his first *Critique*, is assigned to the understanding, in his *Second Critique*.<sup>21</sup> This is also a point of disagreement between Kant and Heidegger. For Heidegger, transcendental imagination makes the formation of the horizon of objectivity possible, since it is the synthesizer and mediator, between sensibility and thought. Thus, pure productive and reproductive imagination “is the formative centre of ontological knowledge and the root of both stems”<sup>22</sup> (i.e. sensibility and understanding). Fourthly, Kant’s classification of “finite pure reason” as both a faculty of logic and the totality of human consciousness, is also problematic, and according to Heidegger, this reflects a seeming contradiction in Kant’s ontology, arising from his use of the “parameters of traditional logic, (in which the process of understanding is portrayed as a pure rational logical exercise of the mind), thus presenting the imagination’s function of schematism, as a subsumption process of the understanding.”<sup>23</sup> Also, by using this same approach, the role of pure imagination is consequently left unaddressed.

Fifthly, Kant’s detour into anthropological issues made it impossible for him accomplish the task of his *Critique*: the grounding of metaphysics on a pure theory of transcendence. Okoro delineates two possible reasons for Kant’s detour into anthropology, despite his identification of

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<sup>18</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>19</sup> Peter F. Strawson, (2004), *The Bounds of Sense, An Essay on Kant’s Critique of Pure Reason*, (New York: Routledge), p. 41.

<sup>20</sup>Cf. Okoro, p. 161

<sup>21</sup> T. D. Weldon, (1958), *Kant’s Critique of Pure Reason*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press), pp. 70-71.

<sup>22</sup>Martin Heidegger, *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics*, p. 144.

<sup>23</sup> Cf. Martin Heidegger, *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics*, p. 155



transcendental imagination as the faculty of the mind that institutes objectivity and transcendence.<sup>24</sup> First, Kant was seemingly disenchanted with the Swedenborg form of metaphysics which was very idealistic, dogmatic and absolutist. It focused on spiritual entities (God, devil, spiritual monads, evil genius, etc.), which were not accessible to the faculty of sensibility, but belong to the noumenal realm, which for Kant, are unknowable.<sup>25</sup> Secondly, his perspective in his work *Anthropology from a Pragmatic Point of View*, shows Kant as a strong defender of the Enlightenment; and as someone who was very interested in providing a philosophical anthropology that defines the human essence and enthrones the European hegemony over the world.<sup>26</sup> But, as Heidegger points out:

Since anthropology must consider man in his semantic, biological and psychological aspects, the result of such disciplines as characterology, psychoanalysis, ethnology, pedagogy, the morphology of culture, and the typology of *Weltanschauungen*, must converge in it. In so far as all of these differences and, in certain respects, the totality of the *essent* as well can be related to man and thus classified under anthropology becomes so comprehensive that the idea of such a science loses all precision.<sup>27</sup>

From various indications, anthropology is thus incapable of accomplishing the metaphysical task, “it does not qualify to study the real problem of philosophy (that is the subjective edifice of man or human subjectivity), and since its method is both superficial and questionable, its role within philosophy as a whole remains obscure and indecisive.”<sup>28</sup> Furthermore, the admonition supposedly given to Kant by the King of Prussia in 1794, regarding his attacks on the common beliefs and practices of orthodox Christians, seems to inform Kant’s treatment of the disciplines of cosmology, psychology and theology under the *Transcendental Dialectic* section of his Critique (which addresses cases of fallacies, parallogisms and antinomies) of the mind. This point further explains why Kant recoiled from the discussion of the Transcendental X (or Transcendental Imagination) as the institutor of human transcendence and objectivity. To take his ontological project to its logical conclusion would have meant a demolition of the belief system of his own people, which would have led to his persecution and possible demise.<sup>29</sup> Kant’s detour into anthropology might also be considered as deliberate, since “ontology as the study of Being in its true essence, does not condone parochialism and prejudices as Kant has demonstrated,”<sup>30</sup> which forms the very

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<sup>24</sup> “In fact, Kant’s transcendental philosophy appeals essentially to two features: first, his novel classification of “synthetic a priori” judgments, and second to the conception of a ‘condition of a possible experience’. These two features coincide naturally with the thought that any proposition which expresses a condition of any possible experience will be bound to have a special status which may be described in terms of the *synthetic a priori* classification.” [Quoted from Ted Honderich, (ed.) *The Oxford Companion to Philosophy*, (1995), (Oxford: Oxford University Press), p. 440]

<sup>25</sup> Okoro, Unpublished Doctoral Dissertation, p. 171

<sup>26</sup> Okoro, p. 171

<sup>27</sup> Martin Heidegger, *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics*, pp. 217-218.

<sup>28</sup> Martin Heidegger, *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics*, p. 218

<sup>29</sup> Cf. Okoro, p. 172

<sup>30</sup> Cf. Okoro, p. 174

foundation of the *Critique*. Also, he was seemingly influenced by his strong adherence to the principles of Newtonian mechanics and Euclidean geometry with regard to the notions of space and time. Within this framework, human understanding cannot be employed beyond what is immanent or experiential. Just as perception occurs within space and time, one can only apprehend appearances or sensibilities. Hence, since the Transcendental X is the *noumenon*,<sup>31</sup> which is unknowable, or cannot be apprehended by consciousness, it seemed a futile exercise to continue investigating it. In stating why consciousness cannot apprehend the Transcendental X, Kant says:

Understanding and Sensibility, with us, can determine objects only when they are employed in conjunction. When we separate them, we have intuitions without concepts, or concepts without intuition – in both cases, representations which we are not in a position to apply to any determinate object.”<sup>32</sup>

Heidegger opines that Kant was so much a prisoner of the tradition that extolled human reason (i.e. the metaphysics or ratio and logos), and so, saw an abyss in the transcendental imagination which threatened to overthrow the supremacy of logic, and so he recoiled.<sup>33</sup> According to Heidegger: “By his radical interrogation, Kant brought the possibility of metaphysics before the abyss. He saw the unknown; he had to draw back. Not only did the imagination fill him with alarm, but in the meantime (between the first and second editions), he had also come more and more under the influence of pure reason as such”<sup>34</sup>

Kant’s recoil from further investigation of the Transcendental X and his subsequent detour into anthropology was based on his inability to determine what the Transcendental X was, (i.e. the Transcendental Imagination or the unknown root). Consequently, he could not accomplish the major task of his ontology: that of the description of the institution of transcendence. It was Heidegger, in his fundamental ontology of the *Dasein*, (i.e. that which has the ability to apprehend being), who eventually brought to a completion Kant’s unfinished ontological project and laid the ontological foundation for ontic knowledge.<sup>35</sup> In Kant’s *Transcendental Aesthetic*, he discussed what sensibility brings *a priori* to experience, while in his *Transcendental Logic* he attempted to determine the *a priori* contribution of understanding, in so far as they relate *a priori* to objects.<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>31</sup>Kant’s notion of the transcendental object (i.e. the thing-in-itself, plays both an essential and problematic role in his ontology. According to Findlay: “We have to inquire into the feasibility of a view which sees the world of our common experience as throughout dependent on objects and relationships, including those of the subject, which can and must be thought, in quite empty, formal fashion if the world of our common experience is to be understood, and if we are to find empirical surrogates for what ultimately underlies it.” [Quoted from J. N. Findlay, (1981), *Kant And The Transcendental Object: A Hermeneutic Study* (Oxford: Clarendon Press), p. 348

<sup>32</sup> Immanuel Kant, (1970) *Critique of Pure Reason*, (trans. N.K. Smith), (London: Macmillan), p. 274.

<sup>33</sup> Martin Heidegger, p. 173.

<sup>34</sup> Martin Heidegger, p. 178.

<sup>35</sup> Cf. Okoro, p. 177

<sup>36</sup> P. F. Strawson, p. 73

He was indeed a great philosopher of the Enlightenment age, which he understood and clearly pointed out as an age of freedom from self-incurred tutelage.

### 3.0 Conclusion and Recommendation

Kant made great philosophical strides in reconciling British empiricism with the rationalism of continental philosophy. He described his theory of transcendence as an empirical realism that is also a transcendental idealism.<sup>37</sup> However, Kant's transcendental idealism is not idealistic "like that of Berkeley and Edmund Husserl, for whom only our conscious selves and their conscious acts exist absolutely, while all other things exist only in so far as they are perceived or conceived, or as they are posited or 'intended' by such selves."<sup>38</sup> The influence of Leibniz on Kant, mediated by Christian Wolff, was quite immense, in Kant's epistemology, as well as his ontology. Pointing out this observation, Findlay says:

The various distinctions that Kant made regarding the *a priori and a posteriori*; the *a priori analytic and a priori synthetic*; the *noumena and phenomena*; the *true unity of the subject and the merely derivative unity of other things*; that which *ineluctably must be*, and that of what *less ineluctably, only ought to be or is morally necessary*, are to be found less clearly in Leibniz, although Kant has given them other names, and somewhat sharper more extreme delineations.<sup>39</sup>

There is both a relationship and a distinction regarding sensibility and understanding. Each has its forms. The universal forms of the sensible realm are its time and space, by which everything is sensed by us, yet remaining independent of any particular sensible content. The forms of the intelligible realm are certain pure concepts, e.g. substance, cause, possibility, etc, which are used to bind sense-based and other concepts together. However, there is need to avoid the error of subreption (in which case the two realms are confused).<sup>40</sup> There are certainly many lapses, inconsistencies or discrepancies in Kant's ontology, as the foregoing discussion has shown; however, Kant's greatness consists in his balanced concern with all that is in the cave of experience, as well as whatever must be considered as lending intelligibility to the integration of disparate, ambiguous surface-shows, thus, making our dwelling in it both intellectually and morally endurable.<sup>41</sup>

Something is transcendental if it plays a role in the way in which the mind "constitutes" objects and makes it possible for us to experience them as objects in the first place. Ordinary knowledge is knowledge of objects; transcendental knowledge is knowledge of how it is possible for us to experience those objects as objects. This is based on Kant's acceptance of David Hume's argument that certain general features of objects (e.g. persistence, causal relationships) cannot be derived

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<sup>37</sup> Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, A 28, 36

<sup>38</sup> J. N. Findlay, (1981), *Kant And The Transcendental Object: A Hermeneutic Study* (Oxford: Clarendon Press), p. 9

<sup>39</sup> J.N. Findlay, p. 31

<sup>40</sup> J.N. Findlay, p. xiii

<sup>41</sup> J.N. Findlay, p. 383

from the sense impressions that humans have of them. Kant argues that the mind must contribute those features and make it possible for us to experience objects as objects. In the central part of his *Critique of Pure Reason*, the "Transcendental Deduction of the Categories", Kant argues for a deep interconnection between the ability to have consciousness of self and the ability to experience a world of objects. Through a process of synthesis, the mind generates both the structure of objects and its own unity. In his theory of knowledge, this concept is concerned with the condition of possibility of knowledge itself. He also opposed the term *transcendental* to the term *transcendent*, the latter meaning "that which goes beyond" (transcends) any possible knowledge of a human being. For him *transcendental* meant knowledge about our cognitive faculty with regard to how objects are possible *a priori*. "I call all knowledge *transcendental* if it is occupied, not with objects, but with the way that we can possibly know objects even before we experience them."

Therefore, metaphysics, as a fundamental and universal theory, turns out to be an epistemology. Transcendental philosophy, consequently, is not considered a traditional ontological form of metaphysics. Both his achievements and pitfalls are philosophically instructive, especially as minds hearts are focused on the issue of human development. Dewey provides a genetic account of Kant's contribution to the history of philosophy and an explanation of Kant's (and the Enlightenment's) fascination with the freedom of the individual on the one hand, and the need for formalism on the other. Kant, seen in this light, is a transitional figure, a thinker on the way to a full-fledged naturalistic conception of human nature and human interactions. Though Kant is to be applauded for raising the question of supreme importance, the question of authority and despotism, through his discussion of the universal law, humanity, and the kingdom of ends, nevertheless, the artificial structure Kant builds to make the claim for freedoms is itself too steeped in supernaturalism and metaphysics to pull away from authoritarianism.

Dewey develops this idea in a number of later works, but the earliest and strongest is found in his *Reconstruction in Philosophy*. Dewey claims that early modern philosophy is too wedded to classical metaphysics. While the focus shifts to issues of knowledge, the idealism that characterizes classical metaphysics remains. Earlier modern philosophy had the problem of reconciling the traditional theory of the rational and ideal basis, stuff and end of the universe with the new interest in individual mind and the new confidence in its capacities. It was in a dilemma. On the one hand, it had no intention of losing itself in a materialism which subordinated man to physical existence and mind to matter, especially just at the moment when in actual affairs man and mind were beginning to achieve genuine rule over nature.<sup>42</sup> On the other hand, the conception that the world as it stood was an embodiment of a fixed and comprehensive Mind or Reason was uncongenial to those whose main concern was with the deficiencies of the world and with an attempt to remedy them. The effect of the objective theological idealism that had developed out of classic metaphysical idealism was to make the mind submissive and acquiescent. The new individualism chafed under the restrictions imposed upon it by the notion of a universal reason which had once and for all shaped nature and destiny. Also, in breaking away from antique and medieval thought, accordingly, early modern thought continued the older tradition of a reason that creates and constitutes the world but combined it with the notion that this Reason operates through the human mind, individual or collective. The sensible world is the manifestation of the intelligible world.

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<sup>42</sup> John Dewey, *Reconstruction in Philosophy. The Middle Works 1899–1924*. Vol. 12, 1920, p. 107

The intelligible world is the key to the philosophic comprehension of the sensible world. The subjective unity that is self-consciousness, the “I,” is too weak to do the job of uniting empirical content. Kant is therefore forced to posit a thing-in-itself to provide the transcendental ground for this activity. The result is a ‘two worlds’ metaphysics—one sensible, material, and phenomenal; the other rational, noumenal, and transcendental. Particularly important for Dewey is the necessity of exploiting the supposed logical ends of absolutism and idealism as he sees it preached in the great German systems of the early 19th century. These ends are the amalgamation of absolutism, nationalism, and the state that supposedly coalesces to form an explicit racial and cultural superiority. Dewey’s radically democratic inquiry is the antithesis of absolutistic inquiry. It neither endorses nor is the product of an absolutistic philosophic framework. Neither is it the product of a national “spirit” or state. Rather it reinforces its own legitimacy and holds its own authority. It is to be, as Dewey often remarks, wholly experimental, for philosophy stands or falls with the conception of an absolute.

Whether a philosophy of absolutes is theoretically sound or unsound may be practically as dangerous a matter of fact as political absolutism history testifies. The situation puts in relief what finally is at issue between a theory which is pinned to a belief in an Absolute beyond history and behind experience, and one which is frankly experimental.<sup>43</sup> Here, as elsewhere in Kant’s work, we may observe the transitional, and hence mixed, character of his thought. And here, as elsewhere, there is a need to distinguish between that in Kant which is a matter only of dogmatic presupposition, and that which logically flows from the positive results of Kant’s inquiries. The outcome will be but a repetition of that lesson of Kant which has already been before us, the lesson of the untenableness of all ontological theories, which are colored by materialism, and of the truth of philosophy’s universal doctrine concerning the exclusive primacy of spirit in the world of absolute reality.

Any philosophy that is not consistently experimental will always traffic in absolutes, no matter in how disguised a form. In Kant as everybody knows, the two strains [of empiricism and rationalism] came together; and the theme of the formation of the knowable world by means of a thought that operated exclusively through the human knower became explicit. Idealism ceased to be metaphysical and cosmic in order to become epistemological and personal. Kant wrote his philosophy with an eye on the needs of his people. Although the relevance his thoughts or ideas are not restricted to his people, he worked towards the institution of the European hegemony. If our African philosophers are to be relevant today, they must reflect on what affects the African person, and that involves the disuse of borrowed parameters and linguistic categories of discourse; and the intensive deployment of tools of philosophical discourse that are autochthonous to the African experience. In this way, we shall soar high, far beyond our imagination, and contribute substantially to world reconstruction and human development.

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<sup>43</sup> John Dewey, *Reconstruction in Philosophy* pp. 107–108.

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