NITY OF SELF-CONSCIOUSNESS IN KANT'S PHILOSOPHY

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Kant'ın Saf Aklın Eleştirisi adlı eserinde, kendini bilme (algının birliği) sorunu son tahlilde bilginin en yüksek ilkesi olduğu için merkezi bir öneme sahiptir. Onun bilen özne ile bilinen nesne arasında bir bağlantı noktası olduğu göz önüne alındığında, bu noktaya nüfuz etmenin hem bilen özne hem de bilinen nesneyi aynı anda kavramak anlamına geleceği ortaya çıkar. Ne var ki, tabiatları açısından özne ile nesne arasında aşılmaz görünen bir mesafe söz konusu ise, bunlar insan zihninde nasıl bir birlik teşkil edebilirler? Daha açık olarak söylersek, burada ortaya çıkan sorun, "basit ve haddi zatında tamamen boş bir 'ben'in tezahürü" (A 346/B 404)[1] ile duyu verileri arasındaki boşluğun nasıl aşılacağı ile ilgilidir. Bu çalışmamızda, Kant'ın felsefesi açısından, özne ile nesne arasındaki boşluğun, algılanan verileri (manifold) terkip ederek nesneye kendi tümel özdeşliğini veren özne tarafından aşıldığını göstermeye çalışacağız.

Duyu verilerinin (manifold) terkibi (synthesis), aynı anda nesnenin özdeşliğini temsil eden yeknesak öznenin kendiliğinden (spontaneous) aktı ile gerçekleşir. Buna ilaveten, nesnenin özdeşliği bağımsız olan öznenin özdeşliğine bağımlı olduğu için, bu iki özdeşlik öznenin yargı aktı içinde birleştirilir. Buna göre, özne ve nesne arasındaki mesafe anlamanın kendiliğinden aktı aracılığı ile aşılmaktadır. Bu gerçek şöyle ortaya çıkar: Özne ve nesne tabiatları açısından birbirlerine zıt olmakla birlikte, özne kural koyucu olarak eylemde bulunduğu ve nesne bu kurala uyduğu için, onlar, diğer taraftan, birbirlerini tamamlamaktadır. Sonuç olarak, nesne olmaksızın özne kendi özdeşliğinin farkına varamaz ve özne olmaksızın nesne tümel bir özdeşliğe sahip olamaz.

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[1] Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, trans. Norman Kemp Smith (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1965).

In Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason*, the problem of self-consciousness (unity of apperception) is of central importance by reason of being, in the last analysis, the highest principle of knowledge. In view of the fact that it is the nexus between knowing subject and object known, to penetrate this crucial point suggests to grasp both subject and object at the same time. However, given that there is a seemingly insurmountable gap between subject and object in respect to their different natures, how can they constitute a unity in the human mind? Said more clearly, the confusing problem here is how the gap between "the simple, and in itself completely empty representation 'I '" (A 346/B 404) and the data of sensibility can be bridged. This paper hopes to show that the gap between subject and object can be bridged by the subject, which gives the object a universal aspect of its identity, through combining the manifold in intuition.

First of all, it would be appropriate to establish a starting point for inquiring the self-consciousness. We discern basically three elements in the unity of apperception: a) The knowing subject, b) the object known, and c) the act of knowledge. The act of knowledge witnesses the relationship between intelligent subject and intelligible object, that is to say, it represents the sphere belonging to consciousness. But let us recall that, according to Kant, since we cannot know the object in itself, the sphere of consciousness is confined to the object as it is given to us, which is given to us as "appearance" (A 20/B34).

From this viewpoint, we should determine the nexus where the unity of subject and object is constituted as a starting point. We realize that this starting point is at the same time a final point. In other words, accepting it as a starting point means that it is a dividing line between subject and object; in contrast, affirming it as a nexus is to place it as the unifying point between subject and object. It is manifest, therefore, that this subject matter should be taken into account from two different points. In that context, Kant says:

> It (synthetic unity of apperception) is not merely a condition that I myself require in knowing an object, but is a condition under which every intuition must stand in order *to become an object for me.* For otherwise, in the absence of this synthesis, the manifold would *not* be united in one consciousness. (B138)

If the subject stands in a position diametrically opposed to object, then the sphere of consciousness is divided into two parts: One belongs to the intelligent subject, and the other appertains to the intelligible object.

So we can surmise that subject and object are in a relationship of sameness and otherness, and of oppositeness and completeness to each other at one and the same time. If this is the case, what is that which provides subject and object with their dual, or rather dyadic natures? We intimated above the irreducible natures of subject and object on the presupposition that if there was a real identity between subject and object in self-consciousness, the subject would never have been said to be really conscious of any object. So they both should have their own identities.

When analyzing the dual, or dyadic, nature of the "identity" of any object, we realize that it has a both universal (necessary) and individual (contingent) structure. To speak more clearly, owing to its unchangeable and universal character, it can be *subject* to our knowledge, while by virtue of its individual disposition, it can be *object* of our knowledge.

Consequently, because of their identities, the knowing subject and the object known constitute a dyadic scheme in our consciousness. On this level, the problem we are faced with is what the universal and the individual conditions of intelligibility of an object are. In other words, from where can an object obtain its unchangeable and necessary character, and its singular and contingent quality? On this point, it would be proper to recall Kant's saying: "If the object with which our knowledge has to deal were things in themselves we could have no a priori concepts of them" (A 129).

It seems that a priori or universal character cannot stem from the object itself. However, how will we explain "the conceptualizability"[2]of objects, and their ability to belong "to a contentually interconnected system of mental states"?[3] We know that our a priori concepts, since they are universal and necessary, cannot bestow the individuality upon the object. Referring to this fact, Kant says that "an a priori concept which did not relate to experience would be only the logical form of a concept, not the concept itself through which something is thought" (A 96). Accordingly, there must be in the object such a disposition that it both gives the object its individuality and enables it to unite with a priori concepts, and, so to speak, to thus gain its universal character.

This disposition must be the actual existence of the object in the subject knowing, which is called 'intuition'. As this actuality of the object in the subject constitutes a contingent, or non-analytical part of identity of

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[2] Thomas Powell, *Kant's Theory of Self Consciousness* (Oxford :Clarendon Press, 1990), p. 60.

[3] Patricia Kitcher, "Kant's Real Self," *Self and Nature in Kant's Philosophy*, ed. Allen W. Wood (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1984), p. 117.

the object, Kant refrains from arguing that the universal or a priori part of identity springs from object itself. For instance, when he examines the unchangeability of object, he notes:

If cinnabar were sometimes red, sometimes black ...if a man changed sometimes into this and sometimes into that animal form... my empirical imagination would never find opportunity when representing red color to bring to mind heavy cinnabar. Nor could there be an empirical synthesis of reproduction, if a certain name were sometimes given to this, sometimes to that object... independently of any rule to which appearances are in themselves subject" (A 101).

After that, he does not slow in accounting for the source of this regularity. In his opinion, "the order and regularity in the appearances... we ourselves introduce. We could never find them in appearances, had not we ourselves, or the nature of mind, originally set them there" (A 125). If this the case, which role can the actual existence of intuition in the subject play, for the sake of obtaining its universality through a priori concepts?

As far as an intuition is grasped, it has submitted to the a priori rules of understanding in order to become the object known. As has been said above, Kant ascribes all a priori and universal conditions to the knowing subject, and he is very careful to analyze the nature of intuitions in terms of their submission to the rules of understanding. He takes the intuitions themselves as mere 'passive receivers'. "In original apperception every thing must necessarily conform to the conditions of the thoroughgoing unity of self-consciousness" (A 112).

This conformity of intuitions to the understanding is required, apparently, because "in me they can represent something only in so far as they belong with all others to one consciousness, and therefore must be at the least capable of being so connected" (A 116)

We clearly realize that even though an object in the knowing subject has an indeterminable and non-analytic existence, it cannot fully deserve as properly the appellation of 'object' insofar as it remains only as an actual intuition. "It must be possible for the 'I think' to accompany all my representations; for otherwise something would be represented in me which could not be thought at all" (A 132). In other words, when it is unified through a priori concepts of understanding, it enters into the realm of consciousness, and therefore, into the relationship of sameness and otherness with the knowing subject.

Accordingly, there are two necessary conditions for the intelligibility of an object: a) Its actual existence in the knowing subject

and b) its unification under the a priori concepts of the understanding. Now it will be right to ask this question: How can an object acquire the universal aspect (part) of its identity, and therefore its intelligibility through concepts?

It seems logical to think that there must be a necessary relationship between concepts and intuition. But, from where does this necessary relation spring? To ascribe this necessary relation either to concepts or to intuition does not seem satisfactory, because the universality of concepts cannot account for the individuality of intuition, nor can intuition explain the universality of concepts. Thus, the necessary relation must testify the contributions of both concepts and intuitions at one and the same time.[4] In other words, the nature of this necessary relation must include both the analytical necessity of the disposition of concepts and the actual necessity of the existential structure of intuition.

This fact is expressed by Kant as follows: "Thoughts without content are empty, intuitions without concepts are blind" (A 51/B 75). This mutual relationship draws our attention to the point that "the categories ... are the conditions of thought " and "they are fundamental concepts by which we think object for appearances" (A 111). For they are "original and pure concepts" (B 116), they are "not derived from experience, but subjective dispositions of thought, implanted in us from the first moment of our existence" (B 167). So it follows that in order for an object to have 'whatness,' the a priori concepts of understanding are required.

Apparently, Kant wants us to recall this crucial point: Sensibility cannot give us the universal part of identity of an object. If objects have an "orderly character" (A 127), that is, if they have whatness, this is possible only because concepts prescribe laws a priori to appearances, and therefore to nature, "the sum of all appearances" (B 163). However, this opinion may mislead us at first glance. It should not be understood as if we constitute the particular qualities of all individuals. Thus understood, it would be very difficult for Kant to answer Russell's following question: "Why, for instance, do I always see people's eyes above their mouths and not below them?"[5] Kant would probably reply to

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[4] J. Lear says that "for Kant...the conforming objects of knowledge must be "appearances": Empirical knowledge is possible only if it is partially but significantly constituted by a contribution of the human mind. Thus it is very much *our* knowledge to which objects must conform." See Thomas De Koninck "Aristotle on God as Thought Thinking Itself" *The Review of Metaphysics* XLVII, 3 (1994), p. 509.

[5] Bertrand Rusell, *A History of Western Philosophy* (New York: 1945), p. 715

him as follows: Since a concept "universally and adequately expresses such a formal and objective condition of experience" (A 96), there is a conformity of the concept in its most general sense with the actual existence of intuition.

If this reflects the real thought of Kant, we can't help saying that intuition covers over, so to speak, the particular attributes of an object. So, we conclude that when concepts prescribe laws a priori to appearances, they, in a manner, reveal or uncover the specific qualities of individuals.

In this point, Kant may be trying to intimate that there is a big difference between the relationship of form and matter in Aristotelian metaphysics and the relationship of concepts and intuition in Kantian epistemology. In Aristotelian metaphysics, matter (as potential) requires form in order for a composite object to be actual and intelligible. Therefore, matter in itself has no sense. However, in Kantian epistemology, intuition given to knowing subject has its own actuality. It is in need of concepts if it is to be known as intelligible. Hence, in Aristotelian philosophy, forms represent the efficient cause of actuality and intelligibility of the object in itself when united with matter, but in Kantian philosophy, concepts represent the necessary conditions of the intelligibility of object when united with intuitions. Taken by themselves, they are empty. In this context, Kant remarks:

> They [concepts] are mere forms of thought, without objective reality, since we have no intuition at hand to which the synthetic unity of app ception, which constitutes the whole content of these forms, could be applied, and in being so applied determines object. Only our sensible and empirical intuition can give to them body and meaning (B 148).

Now, we can better understand that the nature of thought is merely analytic[6] if it is without intuition, that is, it merely contains the a priori and universal concepts. "[T]he thinking 'I'...does *not* know *itself through the categories,* but knows the categories" (A 402). However, an individual being can only be thought through the understanding's universal concepts. In other words, no particular thing can provide itself with its own intelligibility. Rather, it has to be a *subject* to the a priori concepts of understanding in order to be an intelligible *object.*

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[6] Edward Caird, *The Critical Philosophy of Immanuel Kant,* vol. 1 (Amsterdam: 1969), p. 262.

Evidently, to know an object has a wider content or sense than to think an object. While to know embraces to think, to think does not include to know in its general sense, since to know is related with both thought and intuition. "We cannot think an object save through categories; we cannot know an object so thought save through intuitions corresponding to these concepts" (B 166). This fact indicates also the dividing line between dreaming and waking.

A crucial question now arises in our minds: What is the condition for constituting the relationship between concepts and intuitions? Logically thinking, since the universal aspect of the identity of any object has to be analytic, there must be some necessary relation between identity and analyticity. But we know that in Kantian epistemology, even though the universal aspect of identity of any object is constituted by analytic concepts, nonetheless the analytic concepts cannot give to an object the universal aspect of its identity, merely as concepts. This is so because, without actuality, concepts only represent the possible intelligibility of any object, so far as it is concerned with our subject matter.

Therefore, we have to admit for this condition that since it is both actual and analytic (transcendental) one, it must synthesize the representations through concepts. To acknowledge the actuality and transcendental nature of this condition amounts to saying that it is, in its real sense, identical with itself. Thus we have reached a junction in the road: One road leads to the identical condition, or the 'I', which "in fact exists as a conscious subject."[7] Kant does not enter this way. He argues that "we don't have, and cannot have, any knowledge whatever of any subject (A 350). When looking at the other way which Kant presents to us, we immediately realize that the 'I' represents the whole dual, or dyadic nature of self-identity. To put this more clearly, even though the 'I' is actual and transcendental, that is intelligible, nonetheless it is in need of an object in order to be a knowing *subject.*

Consequently, while in the former way, to be an intelligible subject is to be the efficient and the necessary condition of being a knowing subject, in the latter, however, this case refers only to the necessary condition. Thus, in order to know itself, the 'I' has to know its object at the same time. This is to say that the 'I,' in order to be conscious of its own identity, has to be conscious of an object's identity. However, at this point we should be careful not to admit of two kind of

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[7] Hubert Schwyzer, *The Unity of Understanding: A Study in Kantian Problems* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990), p. 83.

consciousness, respectively related to the 'I' and the object. Otherwise, we would undermine the identity of self-consciousness.[8]

Thus, the relation of sameness and otherness between subject and object shows the relation of oppositeness and completeness in self-consciousness at the same time. In this context, Kant says:

We are conscious a priori of the complete identity of the self in respect of all representations which can ever belong to our knowledge, as being a necessary condition of possibility of all representations. For in me they can represent something only in so far as they belong with all others to one consciousness (A 116).

It seems that the intelligibility or the identity of object necessarily depends on the identity of subject. Nonetheless, the problem, asked in the beginning of this paper, arises again: How can these two identities unite in one consciousness?

Apparently, the solution to this problem, after all, seems to be possible through an analysis of the relationship between the subject and the manifold of intuition, which is called 'synthesis.' Kant says, "By synthesis, in its most general sense, I understand the act of putting different representations together, and of grasping what is manifold in them in one cognition" (A 77/B 103). Let us first of all take up "the act" of combining different representations. Kant describes this act as spontaneous: "But the combination of a manifold is an act of spontaneity" (B 130). Spontaneity refers in Kantian epistemology to the originality of an act of understanding, that is, it is "not derivative from what is given."[9] Accordingly, its originality stems from the self-identity of the knowing subject. In other words, since the knowing subject does not borrow either actual or transcendental parts (aspects) in order to constitute its identity, which is to say that it does not borrow its intelligibility from another being, its act is spontaneous.

This spontaneous act provides the subject with knowledge of an object. "The second is the power of knowing object through these representations (spontaneity [in the production] of concepts)" (A 50/B 74). Therefore, there is a necessary relation between this spontaneous act of understanding and the concepts. "Concepts are based on the spontaneity of thought" (A 68/B 93).

We have seen that when intuitions are unified with concepts, objects receive the universal aspect of their identities. In this case, the

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[8] Schwyzer, *Ibid*, p. 90.
[9] Schwyzer, *Ibid*, p. 89.

concept is the nexus between the spontaneous act of subject and the manifold. "The thinking 'I'...knows the categories, and through them all objects". (A 402). However, in order to be conscious of both its identity and the object's, it has to unite the manifold in one consciousness. "Only in so far, therefore, as I can unite a manifold of given representations in one consciousness, is it possible for me to represent to myself the identity of the consciousness in [i.e., throughout] these representations" (B 133).

It seems that to unite a manifold of given representations is to give the object the universal aspect of its identity. Since after being combined through concepts an intuition deserves the title of representation or object,[10] "it is not the consciousness of many things outside it, but the consciousness of the existence of itself only, and of other things merely as its representations" (A 404).

In this situation, "objects of this kind are, therefore, nothing more than the transference of this consciousness of mine to other things, which in this way alone can be represented as thinking beings" (A 374/B 405). Kant also describes the act of giving the necessary identity of manifold as an act of judgment. When the subject synthesizes the manifold, it judges it as an object.

In conclusion, the synthesis of the manifold can take place only by a spontaneous act of unitary subject, which at the same time represents the identity of an object. In addition, since the identity of an object is conditioned by the unconditioned identity of the subject, these two different identities unite in one act of the subject's judgement. Therefore, the gap between subject and object can be bridged by the spontaneous act of understanding. This fact springs, in a manner, from this reality: While subject and object are opposite each other in respect of their natures, they are on the other hand complementary, because the subject acts as a rule-giver and the object submits to this rule. Without an object, no subject can know its own identity, while without a subject no object can have a complete (universal) identity.

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[10] In other words, after being synthesized, it can be intelligible to us. Therefore, as Todes remarks, "experience is intelligible to us because we know what we think merely by thinking it, and experience is in part what we think." See, Samuel Todes, "Knowledge and The Ego: Kant's Three Stages of Self,Evidence" in *Kant: A Collection of Critical Essays*, ed. R. Aul Wollf (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1968).

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