

ATHANASIOS P. FOTINIS, New York

THE LOGICAL AND ONTOLOGICAL STATUS OF KANT'S CONCEPT OF THE NOUMENON AND THE HEGELIAN INTERPRETATION

1. The Traces of Noumena in Ancient Greek Thinkers.

Kant's fundamental distinction between phenomena and noumena owes its metaphysical origin to Ancient Greek Philosophy. The Greek philosophers are the earliest thinkers who found themselves in the forefront of philosophical inquiry into the problem of being. This is, as Plato put it in the *Sophist* (246a), "the struggle over the nature of what is" (ἡ γιγαντομαχία περὶ τῆς οὐσίας) which took place in the earliest philosophers, as for example those of Heraclitus and Parmenides. But the traces of this distinction between phenomena and noumena are found in Greek thinkers such as the atomist Democritus, the hedonist Aristippus, the relativist Protagoras, and especially the realist Plato.

Democritus is the first among the Greek philosophers who makes such a metaphysical inquiry into the explanation of being. He is the first thinker who discovers the atoms (τὰ ἄτομα) and, by the determination of the atom, he gives a peculiar interpretation of being. Democritus sees the two sides of the world, and therefore he distinguishes the phenomena from the real things, that is, the phenomenological surface and the ontological essence of the things. The perceptual qualities of things, e.g., colour, sound, taste, smell, and even warmth and coldness, are phenomena, since they fall within sense-perception. Phenomena occur in the meeting of our sense-perceptions with things and manifest the qualities of the latter, since the phenomena themselves are perceptual qualities. But the reality of the things consists of the atoms which, though themselves unseen, are the true elements of individual things. Atoms in space collide and bounce off one another to form certain configurations in which things are perceived, since things are collections of the indivisible particles, i.e., atoms. Democritus, however, distinguishes between the subjective phenomena of things and the unseen atoms, that is, the real things. The latter are uncreated, indestructible, and infinite entities, and as such they may claim to be things in themselves, since they have no

positive being.¹ Therefore, Democritus' distinction between phenomena and real things, that is, things in themselves, may be seem to the critic to be too elementary, but, nevertheless, it is the basis upon which both the Greek and Modern traditions of philosophy follow.

Aristippus of Cyrene, the grandfather of phenomenology, sees a clarified distinction between phenomena and things in themselves (τὰ ὄντα καθ' αὐτά). He bases his theory upon the ground of mere perception and bare sensation, for in fact the observer knows the things he perceives through sensations without knowing the causal act which causes their mutual perceptions. But Aristippus does not seem to be aware of the clear distinction between the s u b j e c t and the o b j e c t, a distinction between sense object and physical object. This is the distinction between the subjective perception of the physical object and the objective existence of the real physical object, which derives from modern natural science during the time of Galileo and Descartes. Nevertheless, Aristippus distinguishes between perceptual affection, that is, the phenomenon, and the thing in itself, since the latter is external to the man it affects. The perceptual affection exists in man's consciousness (τὸ πάθος ἡμῖν ἐστὶ ποιητικόν), while the thing in itself (τὸ ὄν καθ' αὐτὸ) is not known to man, since its being is approached through the existential factor of "it is" without the involvement of the attributive factor.² But Aristippus never attempts to see a solution to the problem of the thing in itself, since he is committed to the phenomenological assertion that: "It is uncontradicted and accepted that man perceives the white and tastes the sweet; but it is impossible to declare that the unknown cause of affection is the white or the sweet, because the proper thing (φυσικὸν ὄν), without the white can be disposed whitely, and without the sweet sweetly"³. Therefore, whether the sensations of other people agree with our own, is a fact we cannot know, because the affirmative is not proved by the identity of the names which are employed.

Aristippus' subjective phenomenological point of view may serve as a basis for the subjectivism of the Protagorean doctrine of knowledge. The doctrine of Protagoras as a subjective theory of knowledge is a consistent doctrine, and has valid criteria as regards man's role in subjective knowledge. But Protagoras limits human knowledge only to phenomena. He gives a general view to the meaning of "phenomenon", and teaches that man knows

1. Cf. on this point: "Democritus' View on the Sensory World", W. T. Jones, *A History of Western Philosophy*, Volume I, New York, Harcourt, Brace & World, Inc., 1969.

2. Sextus Empiricus, *Adv. Mathem.*, Volume II, Book VII; trs. C. R. Bury, "Loeb Classical Library", Harvard University Press, 1935, p. 91.

3. Ibid., p. 191.



only phenomena and not at all real things. Besides phenomena there are no real things which could claim to exist as things in themselves. Thus, Protagoras holds a phenomenalism according to which the things which appear to man are as they appear to him, and as such they are phenomenal appearances, that is, phenomena, instead of real things which manifest themselves through the senses. Therefore, Protagoras sees no distinction between phenomena and things which appear in themselves, since he holds that man has knowledge of things which appear to him simply because they appear, and not because they are physical things within objective reality, that is, things in themselves⁴.

This relativism of Protagoras becomes Plato's point of departure for the restoration of being and the separation and distinction of its essence and its phenomena. For Plato, all perceptible things (τὰ αἰσθητὰ) are phenomena because they are subject to our sensations, while all intelligible entities (τὰ νοητὰ) are real beings (ὄντως ὄντα). These entities are the objects of thought, and as such belong to the realm of possibility⁵. Plato conceives the true meaning of the intelligible entity to be the thing in itself (τὸ ὄν καθ' αὐτό). He wants to tell us that beyond this conditional reality, which we know through sensation and understanding, there remains something untouched and, as such, is the essence of things, that is, the *ousia*, which as thought is never known to us, because our intellectual knowledge is limited. This "something" must be the thing in itself, since it is thought of as an "idea" which expresses the being of the things apart and independently from all temporal, spatial, and causal processes⁶.

Therefore, according to Plato, the thing in itself never becomes subject to causality, existence, and reality, because its concept lies beyond our sensory experience and our categories of understanding and, as such, is to us unknown. The concept of this thing cannot become the object of knowledge, since it is only a "being of reason", that is, in modern terminology, a "rational idea" (*ens rationis*). This "rational idea" is the abstract character of every object, which in itself is a causal being, since the abstract objects of thought require a cause. Hence, this sort of idea must exist independently (αὐτὸ καθ' αὐτό) as the thing in itself which serves the purpose of abstraction and at the same time shows the limits of our knowledge⁷.

4. Cf. on this point: F. M. Conford, *Plato's Theory of Knowledge*, New York, Liberal Arts Press, 1957.

5. Plato, *Sophist*, 254d.

6. Conford, op. cit., p. 248.

7. F. Ueberweg, *History of Philosophy*, Volume I, New York, Charles Scribner's Sons, 1903, pp. 115-117.

Plato holds that this causal being, in the sense that it causes being and cognition, is the "Highest Idea", which belongs in the realm of *nooumena*⁸ (objects of reason) or *intelligibilia*, that is, the intelligible world. The causal being, however, is virtually unthinkanble, because it is a "non-intelligible" essence, for it is the cause of all truth and beauty. Therefore, according to Plato, the causal being is that idea to which all things owe their being, and the mind its power of cognition, since this being is the "Highest Idea". For, in Plato's view the "Highest Idea" is the concept of the "Idea of Good", which is the ontological foundation of being and existence, for "the good may be considered as an idea quite as universal as being, since everything in so far as it is truly existent, is also necessarily good"⁹. For, according to Plato, the "Idea of Good" is the reality that "gives to the objects of knowledge their truth and to the knower the power of knowing", since it is "the cause of knowledge and truth in so far as it is known". (*Rep.* 508e).

Finally, Plato insists that the "Idea of Good" is superior to the "Idea of Being", because the former bestows intelligibility and exists simultaneously with things. The things as the objects of knowledge receive intelligibility from the eternal presence of the "Good" and their being is known through their essence and existence (509b). The "Idea of Good" in its reflection with the "Divine Reason" becomes identical to it, since all created things, according to Plato, are good in so far as they are the copies of the original forms of the Ideas. The "Idea of Good", however, thought apart from the other Ideas, is equivalent to God, who, as the "Absolute Good", contemplates the Ideas and makes all generated things, both real and good. Plato, however, in the *Phaedo*, asserts that "everything which exists and is knowable, has received from God, who is the Idea of the Good, its existence and its ability to be known, because he knew that it was better that it should exist, than that it should not exist"¹⁰. Therefore, Plato's "Idea of Good" considered as the "Absolute Good" is God alone, who bestows existence upon the objects of knowledge, since it is the unifying principle of the essential order of things, although itself is a "non-intelligible" being, that is, a noumenon.

2. Kant's Distinction Between Phenomena and Noumena.

Kant makes explicit the implicit distinction of phenomena and noumena which was held by the early Greek philosophers. He holds that a certain

8. Plato, *Republic*, Book VI, 508c, *Parmenides* 132c.

9. Ueberweg, op. cit., p. 117.

10. Ueberweg, op. cit., p. 122.

object which is entitled as sensible entity (*Sinnenwesen*) is a phenomenon, while a possible object of thought which may be entitled as an intelligible entity (*Verstandeswesen*) is a noumenon¹¹. The perceptual content of a phenomenon arises from the reflection of the subject on the object, which is determined by a causal act. This act itself is a transcendental object, which presupposes an uninformed and indetermined object of thought, that is, the concept of the noumenon. The concept of the noumenon, however, hides itself behind the phenomenon and always looks to the phenomenon to explain it, unless the phenomenon does not have a fixed meaning.

The starting point for Kant's distinction between phenomena and noumena seems to be his inquiry into the origin of the categories. It seems probable that sensibility as the basis for the "forms of intuition", namely space and time, forces Kant to look for another ground beyond sensation, for the categories are the "forms of understanding". The categories are the primary "logical faculty" which unites *a priori* all given sensible intuitions into "one consciousness". While considered apart from intuition, "they have even less meaning than the pure sensible forms". (B 306, p. 266). Through the "forms of intuition" we perceive the physical objects, but we have no knowledge of the "mode" that combines the sensible manifold, which apart from our possible intuition "signifies nothing at all". This distinction of the "mode" in which we intuit the appearances of objects (*sensibilia*), that is, phenomena, implies "other possible things", which are thought as objects through the understanding (*intelligibilia*), that is, noumena. Therefore, the noumenon is a concept of the understanding, for the latter, "when it entitles an object in a [certain] relation mere phenomenon, at the same time forms, apart from that relation, a representation of an 'object in itself' and so comes to represent itself as also being able to form 'concepts' of such objects". (B 307, p. 267).

Kant sees that the understanding, by the concept of the noumenon as the thing in itself, acquires a "negative extension" of possible knowledge, that is, it "limits sensibility". The noumenon, however, in doing so "at the same time sets limits to itself, recognizing that it cannot know these noumena through any of the categories, and that it must therefore think them under the title of an unknown something". (B 312, p. 273). The concept of the noumenon, however, is a self-consistent form of being, for a noumenon is only an object of thought, and therefore it has no reference to object of experience. This shows that there is a gap between the categories of human experience and the unknown noumena, since the latter are things in themselves which

11. Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, trs. N. K. Smith, New York, St. Martin's Press, 1965, B306, pp. 266-267.

do not have an empirical transcendence to the physical things. For, as Kant states in the *Critique of Pure Reason*, “we can never even know whether such a transcendental or exceptional knowledge is possible under any conditions, at least not if it is to be the same kind of knowledge as that which stands under our ordinary categories”. (B 314, p. 274).

The concept of the noumenon, therefore, does not fall into a temporal *datum*, since it is a non-temporal item, which points out to an “unamplifiable logical possibility”. This however, points out the matter of the “unknowable”, since there is no sense of an “intellectual mode” of knowing the thing as “it is”, that is, the noumenon. For, if there is such a thing as a thing in itself, this thing must be a “non-temporal” item, which cannot be apprehended by the mind. The mind understands only things which exist within the limits of phenomenal reality. But reality itself does not exclusively depend upon the value of *sense-data*, for the latter involve illusion and hallucination, and therefore sense-experience never reveals the true world of our spatiotemporal demonstration. Hence, reality extends itself beyond the realm of the physical world, since intellectual meditation allows it to reach “mental entities”. Therefore, such a mental entity as an object of thought is a noumenon, that is, a thing in itself, which claims to be neither an objective thing nor a subjective *sense-datum*, but rather a simple concept which implies the possibility of knowledge into “negative extension”.

Nevertheless, in the *Critique of Pure Reason* the concept of the noumenon seems to be problematic, since there is no principle to make possible the application of such a concept which claims to be a purely intelligible entity. This notion of the noumenon as a thing in itself leaves only a possibility for the consideration of its objective reality, which must lie beyond our sensible world. Kant asserts that the concept of the noumenon cannot be given to us by any means, since “we cannot think of any way in which such intelligible objects might be given. The problematic thought which leaves open a place for them serves only, like an empty space, for the limitation of empirical principles, without itself containing or revealing any other object of knowledge beyond the sphere of those principles”. (B 313, p. 275).

This “empty space” of the *Critique of Pure Reason* is filled with the concept of freedom, the idea of immortality, and the notion of god in the *Critique of Practical Reason*. Kant by the application of reason to another region of possibility attempts to give a possible solution to the problem of the concept of the noumenon, which he bases on the idea of freedom. He uses the concept of freedom to introduce an intelligible world of noumenal reality. The notion of such a suprasensible world of noumenal freedom Kant attempts to explain in terms of revelation, as given by the pure practical reason. Kant claims

that he sees an intelligible world in “the great revelation which we experience through pure practical reason by means of the moral law — the revelation of an intelligible world through realization of the otherwise transcendent concept of freedom”¹². For freedom transcends the intelligible or noumenal world which lies beyond this temporal and causal sensible world, which is determined by the category of time and the law of natural necessity. Man, however, according to Kant considers himself from two points of view, that is, sense and reason, by which he becomes aware that he belongs to both sides of the world, the natural world and the intelligible world, i.e., the noumenal world. Therefore, freedom helps man to escape from the bounds of subjectivity of natural laws, and so to become a free member of another world, the intelligible world in which his free actions conform to the autonomous will of freedom, and thereby he enjoys a noumenal freedom.

The existence of free actions must be questioned even by Kant himself, for there is no intellectual intuition in operation to show whether these actions actually occur. Nevertheless, a consideration of these actions shows that they are not determined, since they are not subject to temporality and causality, and therefore they are free. But the alternative freedom raises the question of whether man’s actions are both determined and free, which makes man at the same time both determinate and free, for which reason the idea of freedom is inconsistent. This, however, shows that freedom is problematic, since we cannot assert the existence of a noumenal freedom. Nevertheless, Kant feels that there is a “noumenal reality”, since man as a rational being through the faculty of reason enjoys a noumenal freedom. He observes that only from an empirical point of view is man determined, while from a rational point of view he remains free, that is, man is noumenally free. Kant, however, ascribes freedom to the intelligible or noumenal world, and he insists that if we want to save our freedom “no other course remains than to ascribe the existence of a thing so far as it is determinable in time, and accordingly its causality under the law of natural necessity, namely the appearance, and to attribute freedom to the same being as a thing-in-itself”. (V, 95, p. 201).

This consideration of man’s rational point of view, in so far as he is not subject to temporality and causality, shows that man escapes from the natural bounds of subjectivity, and at the same time he becomes free. Kant in this sense establishes the idea of freedom, since he observes that “the same subject, which, on the other hand, is conscious also of his own existence as a thing-in-itself, also views his existence so far as it does not stand under

12. Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Practical Reason*, trs. L. W. Beck, Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1949, V, 94, p. 200.

temporal conditions, and to himself as determinable only by laws which he gives to himself through reason". (V, 97, p. 203). This, however, shows that man is free, since he chooses to determine himself through self-imposed laws.

Therefore, with the idea of freedom Kant shows that there is a noumenal reality, because freedom belongs to it as a logical consistency. For freedom, as a practical postulate of a good will, belongs to both realms of being, that is, the sensible world and the intelligible or noumenal world. The concept of the noumenon, however, as a thing in itself, must belong to a noumenal reality, which itself is not logically contradictory, since our intuition is not strong enough to prove either its falsity or truth. Therefore, Kant's distinction of the concept of the noumenon implies that, in the sense of the "negative extension", there is another possible world. This world, however, must be the object of thought since it involves no sensibility. Therefore, according to Kant, the concept of the noumenon exists, because it is a thing in itself rather than a positive thing.

3. The Negative and Positive Sense of Noumenon in Kant.

Kant in his metaphysical inquiry about the concept of the noumenon, that is, the thing in itself, looks to see whether this thing is a possible "mode" of being either in a negative use of the term or a positive one. In the first *Critique* he observes that the noumenon as thing in itself is a negative concept, since "it is not indeed in any way positive, and is not a determinate knowledge of anything, but signifies only the thought of something in general, in which I abstract from everything that belongs to the form of sensible intuition"¹³. This, however, implies that the concept of the noumenon is negative rather than positive. A noumenon in the negative sense is a thing in so far as it is not an object of our sensible intuition, but it is rather abstracted from the "mode of intuiting it". The noumenon, however, is thought in a non-sensuous manner without intuitive involvement, and therefore it never falls into our sensible intuition. The idea we conceive in this way is the negative use of the noumenon. This idea in the negative sense, of the noumenon, according to Kant, is indispensable, because "the doctrine of sensibility is likewise the doctrine of noumena in the negative sense, that is, of things which the understanding must think without this reference to our mode of intuition, therefore not merely as appearances but as things in themselves". (B 307, p. 268). The

13. Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, A252, p. 270.

concept of the noumenon, however, is involved in the idea of the things which conform to the *a priori* conditions of experience, and therefore it cannot be known by means of the categories, since it is simply conceived in thought as an object of the pure understanding.

Although Kant denies the application of a definite predicate to the concept of the noumenon, still he feels that there is a possibility for its conception in the negative sense, for the thing in itself to be thought is not in any way contradictory. The noumenon is a necessary concept to curb the extension of sensibility, and therefore to limit the “objective validity of sensible knowledge”, which cannot be extended over the realm of understanding. Consequently, the concept of the noumenon has a “negative employment”, since it functions as a “limiting concept” of sensibility without affirming anything positive which lies beyond our sensible experience. The domain, however, which is beyond the sphere of appearances is empty for us, and therefore we cannot know anything about the noumenon as a thing in itself. (A 255, pp. 271-2).

Kant, therefore, by the employment of the concept of the noumenon in the negative sense, wants to remind us how far we can go beyond our limited temporal experience, since our knowledge about the facts and events we experience imposes limits in order for our statements to be meaningful. The imposition of this genuine limitation on our meaningful statements implies that this limiting concept exists in a non-temporal reality, that is, the “noumenal reality”, which cannot be described by human language, because its function is limited. Hence, the fact that we cannot describe the concept of the noumenon means “that our sensibility has limits which restrict what we can mean, and which therefore cannot be shown to be limits in the usual way, namely by describing their removal”¹⁴.

Finally, in exploring the possibility of whether there is another alternative for the consideration of the concept of the noumenon, Kant also sees its use in the positive sense. The noumenon in the positive sense arises as an intellectual presupposition of intuition, since it is a possible thing which has a right to be in a positive way. Probably, by the employment of the concept of the noumenon in the positive sense Kant wants to show that there are possible objects which belong to the intelligible or noumenal world. He assumes that the noumenon in the positive sense is conceived in thought, and therefore it lies within the realm of possibility, since it is not a positive thing which can be given in our experience. The concept of the noumenon, however, cannot be given positively, because positive *sense-data* means the

14. J. Bennett, *Kant's Analytic*, Cambridge University Press, 1966, p. 58.

equation of "things in themselves with a specific order of phenomena"¹⁵. Therefore, the noumenon in the positive sense is taken as an object of thought which has only an objective meaning. This meaning is understood as an object of a non-sensible intuition, that is, an intellectual intuition which, as a special "mode" of being has its possibility neither possessed nor apprehended by us, because our intuitive grasp is limited to sensibility. Therefore, according to Kant, the noumenon in the positive sense cannot be explained, since there is no way it can be given to us.

4. The Reasons for Kant's Invention of the Noumena.

The objective critic will see various reasons for which Kant makes the distinction between phenomena and noumena. Among these reasons I will state and explain those which show sufficiently Kant's intention for the discovery of the noumena. The most important of these reasons are: a) *The restriction of cognitive statements to phenomena*: Kant sees that our cognitive statements about things are ascribed to phenomena rather than other possible things. Phenomena, according to Kant, are the appearances of the things, which show up themselves, that is, sensible entities. But the "modes" in which we intuit these sensible entities, which manifest to us the things we know, are not known in themselves, and therefore this implies a possibility of other things. In fact these other things being conscious of themselves are things in themselves, that is, noumena. For, by noumena Kant means intelligible entities which lie behind phenomena, and therefore as original concepts serve to meet the inquiry of metaphysical issues. The concept of the noumenon, according to Kant, as a thing in itself is a "negative thing", and therefore only in the sense of moral experience has a positive meaning. Kant, however, uses this positive meaning as a point of departure to come from noumena to phenomena, since the world we talk about is a phenomenal world in so far as it is presented to us phenomenally, while considered in itself it is "what it is". This, however, implies that the real world is other than the world of our phenomenal experience, since it exists as it is in itself, that is, a noumenal world. Therefore, this exposition of the restriction of our cognitive statements to phenomena only, shows that the reason which Kant poses leads to the discovery of noumena for the explanation of the world¹⁶.

15. G. Schrader, *The Thing in Itself in Kantian Philosophy*, "Philosophy Series", Bobbs-Merrill, Indiana, pp. 38, 41.

16. Cf. on this point: "Phenomena and Noumena", *A History of Philosophy*, F. Copleston, Garden City, New York, Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1960, Volume VI, Part II.

b) *The limitation of sensibility by the understanding*: The extension of the understanding beyond the realm of sensibility, according to Kant, reaches a notion of a “transcendental object”, that is, a reaching of an unknown X which seems to have a possible meaning, and therefore it limits our understanding. Kant observes that such a transcendental meaning involves the form of “something” other than our object of phenomenal experience, since it is conceived as an intelligible entity. The concept of this intelligible entity, according to Kant, is something which is intuited in a non-sensuous manner, and therefore it may be apprehended by a “pure intuition”, that is, a non-sensuous intuition. Although, such a notion of intuition is arbitrary, nevertheless Kant uses it to postulate the notion of the noumena such as god, freedom, and immortality. But, this arbitrary application of non-sensuous intuition to the noumenal entities does not mean that the concept of the noumenon is self-contradictory, for it cannot be proved that such an intuition is impossible¹⁷. For, the fact that we cannot reach a positive knowledge of a noumenon as a thing in itself is due to the difficulty of our understanding in applying itself to a transcendental knowledge about a noumenal world. The poser, however, lies in the gap which exists between human understanding and the concept of the noumenon, since the categories cannot deduce a transcendental knowledge by which a noumenon may be apprehended. Therefore, according to Kant, the concept of the noumenon is conceived only in the negative sense of the term, since it is a possible object of a noumenal reality.

c) *The reality of the world as a third term — existence*: Kant thinks that the explanation of the world depends upon its two metaphysical views, that is, the “phenomenal nature” and the “noumenal basis”, since reality itself is a third term — existence, and therefore it lies in their relation. A real thing is directly apprehended by “the function of mediating the reference of phenomenal nature to a noumenal basis”¹⁸, which falls in the rational realm of ideas. Therefore, according to Kant, the reality of the concrete world calls for a third term — existence, since the real world is other than the world of our phenomenal experience. For the world as a third term — existence is approached in the relation between the things of “phenomenal nature” and the “noumenal basis”, which is the world of real things, that is, the things in themselves, since they are not subject to the relation of the categories of time, space, and cause. The acceptance of this notion of

17. N. K. Smith, *A Commentary to Kant's Critique of Pure Reason*, New York, Humanities Press, 1962, pp. 407-408.

18. Smith, *ibid.*, p. 415.

reality involves knowledge of the relation of the categories of time, space, and cause. The acceptance of this notion of reality involves knowledge of the things in themselves in so far as it does not entail a definite distinction between appearance and reality. The point of their relation is the empirical fact that "things appear to be", and the intellectual assertion that "things are". The latter as an existential proposition claims to assert the existence of real things, that is, things in themselves, since they are neither things given through *sense-data*, nor forms subjectively produced by the mind. Therefore, according to Kant, the concept of the noumenon is an object of noumenal reality, which serves to explain the world in its final totality¹⁹.

d) *The noumena themselves*: Kant assumes that essential realities such as god, freedom, and immortality are noumena, and are therefore not absent from the world; instead they are the ultimate purposes of this world, since they have an essential being. These noumena, namely god, freedom, and immortality are "supersensible objects", and therefore they cannot be given through intuition to us. But their absence from our intuition does not imply that they are unknown, for theoretical reason in increasing its knowledge in the matter of noumena compels itself to admit that there are indeed "supersensible objects"²⁰. The existence of "supersensible objects" is real, since practical reason asserts the existence of such objective realities as god, freedom, and immortality on a basis of moral experience. For theoretical reason takes over to conceive these essential realities, in so far as they are defined "by predicates which necessarily belong to a pure practical purpose and its possibility, as given *a priori*". (V, 141, p. 243). For example, the noumenon "god" as conceived by theoretical reason reminds us that we have gotten far beyond our experience in seeking to discover a "supersensible object", that is, the divine being, within an intelligible or noumenal world. Therefore, according to Kant, the noumena are things in themselves, which extend our experience beyond the sensible world, since through their functioning reveal themselves in this world.

5. Hegel's Solution to the Problem of Kant's Noumena.

The reasons for which Kant discovers the noumena, although justified in their application to the solution of metaphysical issues, still have no power to attribute any real being to them. The Kantian reference to the noumenon

19. Bennett, *Kant's Analytic*, pp. 59-60.

20. Kant, *Critique of Practical Reason*, V, 135, p. 237.

as a thing in itself does not involve a concrete being, since it has no definite conclusion. Kant's solution to the problem of the noumena may not be final, for the objective critic may question the validity of their reality. Despite the view that Kant's noumenon as an "intelligible cause" is thinkable, that is a "theoretically intelligible concept", its existence has nevertheless been denied by some contemporary thinkers. For, in the first place, a noumenon as a thing in itself "is really not a thing; in fact it is nothing at all", while in the second place, the claim that a noumenon is a real thing rather than nothing, is problematic²¹. Kant, however, cannot claim to experience noumena as real thing, i.e., things in themselves, since real things exist beyond our phenomenal experience. The assertion of noumena on a basis of "moral experience" by practical reason, which theoretical reason takes over to reassert their being, leads to absurdity rather than to certain knowledge. For the Kantian categories involve no transcendental knowledge about noumena, since they cannot employ any possible predicates which have a necessary connection with the given *a priori* practical purpose and its possibility (V, 141, p. 243).

Hegel observes that the noumena as things in themselves cannot be known by means of the Kantian categories, since the latter cannot apply themselves to the former, for they differ in form. Kant sees the categories as the "forms of pure understanding", while the noumena as things in themselves are "forms of reason or pure thought", and therefore the categories cannot grasp the meaning of such real things. On the contrary Hegel holds that the categories are "forms of reason or pure thought" also, and therefore they do apply themselves to the noumena, that is, the things in themselves. For, in Hegel's view the noumenon as a thing in itself "bears the mark of the categories", since it is an object of thought which derives from the empty "self-identity" of the "Ego" through absurd levels of abstraction. This conception of the noumenon as thought, however, Hegel demonstrates in the following statement: "The thing-in-itself... expresses the object when we leave out of sight all that consciousness makes of it, all its emotional aspects, and all specific thoughts of it. It is easy to see what is left, — utter abstraction, total negative of every image, feeling, and definite thought"²². The approach of Hegel's solution to the problem of Kant's noumena may be described in the following positive way: "The problem of the thing-in-itself and its irrationality falls away if one accepts Hegel's principle of the identity of thinking and Being.

21. G. Schrader, "The Philosophy of Existence", *The Philosophy of Kant and our Modern World*, ed. W. Hendel, New York, Liberal Arts Press, 1957, p. 49.

22. *The Logic of Hegel*, trs. W. Wallace, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1959, pp. 91-92.

If we accept this unity and the Hegelian proof that thought passes into being and produces the totality of that which is real, it will follow that thought must know Reality, the object which itself produced. The knowledge of things, Hegel contends, can arise only through the identity of the knowing subject and known object which is of the same character as the subject"²³.

The relation between the noumenon as a real thing and appearance, according to Hegel, is seen as a relation between "being-in-itself" and "being-for-another", because that which appears to be something "for-another" is at the same time "in-itself". For both are "posited as moments of one and the same thing", and therefore their determinations are relations which belong to "the unity of Determined Being"²⁴. The "being-in-itself" presents itself to us negatively, because it is an "absolute" limit which shows our finitude and subjectivity, for it is the measure of reality. Thus, in the realm of appearance this being as such manifests itself, and therefore it is conscious of itself, since it is the same thing. This thing, however, restricts itself into a "negative image", that is, the noumenon as thing in itself which is a real thing rather than nothing, for the denial of it is a contradiction.

Therefore, Kant's concept of the noumenon, according to Hegel, is apprehended in an obscure form of abstraction, for it passes through its reflection on the "self", in order to manifest itself in an external unity, i.e., the thing in itself. This is a projection of the transcendental "Ego" which out of its own empty "self-identity" forms an object of thought, that is, a noumenon. The concept of the noumenon as such has a "negative characteristic", and so it bears the mark of the category of negation which is a fit term to express its reality. This category in its "negative extension" transcends possible things which are meant in the negative sense, and therefore they are real things, that is, things in themselves. This implies that Hegel's solution to Kant's concept of the noumenon as a thing in itself is a consequence of its enumeration among the categories, for the former falls into the category of negation because of its "negative characteristic." Hegel, however, by the application of the category of negation succeeds in offering at least, if not a final, a satisfactory solution to the Kantian concept of the noumenon, since this category expresses its "mode" of being. This concept, according to Hegel, is a thing in itself in so far as it is thought apart from its appearing, and therefore a noumenon is knowable and possesses an intelligible or noumenal reality.

23. J. Maier, *On Hegel's Critique of Kant*, New York, AMS Press, Inc., 1966, p. 45.

24. H. D. Lewis, *Hegel's Science of Logic*, trs. W. H. Jonston & L. G. Struthers, New York, Humanities Press, 1929, p. 132.

Η ΛΟΓΙΚΗ ΚΑΙ ΟΝΤΟΛΟΓΙΚΗ ΥΠΟΣΤΑΣΗ ΤΗΣ ΕΝΝΟΙΑΣ ΤΟΥ ΝΟΟΥΜΕΝΟΥ ΣΤΟΝ ΚΑΝΤ ΚΑΙ Η ΕΓΕΛΙΑΝΗ ΕΡΜΗΝΕΙΑ ΤΟΥ

Π ε ρ ί λ η ψ η.

Τὸ ἄρθρο ἐπιχειρεῖ μία σύντομη κριτικὴ ἐπισκόπηση τῆς θεωρίας τοῦ Kant γιὰ τὸ «νοούμενο», δηλαδή τὸ πρᾶγμα καθ' αὐτό. Ἡ θεωρία τοῦ νοουμένου, ὅπως εἶναι γνωστό, ἔχει τὶς ρίζες της στὴν ἀρχαία Ἑλληνικὴ φιλοσοφία. Πρῶτοι οἱ Ἕλληνες φιλόσοφοι ἀπασχολήθηκαν μὲ τὴ μεταφυσικὴ ἔρευνα γιὰ τὴν ὑπαρξὴ τῶν πραγμάτων καθ' ἑαυτά. Ὑποτυπώδης ἔννοια τοῦ νοουμένου στὴ στοιχειώδη διάκρισή του ἀπὸ τὸ φαινόμενο βρίσκεται στὴ φιλοσοφία τοῦ Δημοκρίτου, τοῦ Πρωταγόρα, τοῦ Ἀριστίππου, οἱ ὅποιοι μὲ τὸν τρόπο τους ὁ καθένας διακρίνουν τὰ αἰσθητὰ ὄντα ἀπὸ τὰ νοητά, δηλαδή τὰ φαινόμενα ἀπὸ τὰ πράγματα καθ' αὐτά. Ἀλλ' ἡ ἀληθινὴ ἔννοια τοῦ νοουμένου διατυπώνεται ἀπὸ τὸν Πλάτωνα στὴν *Πολιτεία* VI, 508 C μὲ τὴν ιδέα, στὴν ὁποία ὅλα τὰ πράγματα ὀφείλουν τὴν ὑπαρξή τους, καὶ μάλιστα τὴν ιδέα τοῦ ἀγαθοῦ ὡς τὴν πραγματικότητα ποὺ δίνει στὰ ἀντικείμενα τῆς γνώσης τὴν ἀλήθειά τους καὶ στὸν γνωρίζοντα τὴν δύναμη γιὰ τὴν κατανόηση τῶν πραγμάτων.

Ἡ ἔννοια τοῦ νοουμένου καθιερώνεται στὴν Εὐρωπαϊκὴ Φιλοσοφία μὲ τὸν Kant, ὁ ὁποῖος χαρακτηρίζει τὸ νοούμενο ὡς τὸ ἀντικείμενο τοῦ καθαροῦ λόγου. Τὴν ἀφορμὴ στὸν Kant νὰ διατυπώσῃ τὴν ἔννοια τοῦ νοουμένου στὴν διάκρισή του ἀπὸ τὸ φαινόμενο ἔδωσαν οἱ κατηγορίες, οἱ ὁποῖες ὡς μορφές τῆς νοήσεως (forms of understanding) ἀνάγκασαν τὸν φιλόσοφο νὰ ζητήσῃ τὸ μεταφυσικὸ ὑπόβαθρο τῶν πραγμάτων πέρα ἀπὸ τὴν αἴσθηση. Οἱ κατηγορίες ἀποτελοῦν τὴν στοιχειώδη λογικὴ δύναμη, ἡ ὁποία ἐνώνει a priori τὰ δεδομένα τῶν αἰσθήσεων ποὺ κάνουν συνειδητὸ τὸ αἰσθητὸ ἀντικείμενο. Μὲ τὶς αἰσθητικὲς μορφὲς ἀντιλαμβανόμαστε τὰ αἰσθητὰ ἀντικείμενα χωρὶς νὰ γνωρίζωμε τὸν τρόπο ποὺ συνενώνουν τὰ πολλαπλὰ αἰσθητά, τὰ ὁποῖα δὲν σημαίνουν τίποτε ἔξω ἀπὸ τὴν ἀντίληψή μας. Ὁ «τρόπος» αὐτός, μὲ τὸν ὁποῖο ἀντιλαμβανόμαστε τὴν αἰσθητὴ ὄντοτητα (Sinneswesen) τῶν πραγμάτων, τὸ φαινόμενο, ἀπαιτεῖ τὴν δυνατότητα τῆς λογικῆς ὄντοτητας (Verstandeswesen) τῶν πραγμάτων, τὸ νοούμενο. Κατὰ συνέπεια τὸ νοούμενο εἶναι ἀντικείμενο τοῦ καθαροῦ λόγου, ποὺ ἔχει σχέση μὲ τὸ φαινόμενο, ἀλλὰ ταυτόχρονα σχηματίζει καὶ τὴν νοητὴ μορφή τοῦ ἑαυτοῦ του, δηλαδή τὸ πρᾶγμα καθ' ἑαυτό.

Ἡ διάνοια κατὰ τὸν Κάντ μὲ τὴν ἔννοια τοῦ νοουμένου ὡς τοῦ πράγματος καθ' ἑαυτὸ ἀποβλέπει στὴν δυνατότητα τῆς γνώσεως μὲ βάση τὴν ἀρνητικὴ τῆς ἄποψης, ἡ ὁποία περιορίζει τὴν αἰσθητικότητα καὶ θέτει ὅρια στὸν ἑαυτὸ της. Τὸ νοούμενο ὡς ἀντικείμενο τοῦ καθαροῦ λόγου

είναι μιὰ αὐτοσύστατη μορφή ἢ αὐθύπαρκτη ἰδέα. Ἐκτείνεται πέρα ἀπὸ τὴν αἴσθηση στὴν λογικὴ δυνατότητα τῆς γνώσεως, γιατί τὸ νοούμενο δὲν μπορεῖ νὰ εἶναι οὔτε ἀντικειμενικὸ πρᾶγμα οὔτε ὑποκειμενικὸ δεδομένο τῶν αἰσθήσεων, ἀλλ' εἶναι ἀπλῆ ἔννοια ποὺ ἀναφέρεται στὴν δυνατότητα τῆς γνώσεως στὴν ἀρνητικὴ τῆς ἄποψις. Ἔτσι ἡ ἔννοια τοῦ νοουμένου δείχνει ὅτι ἡ πραγματικότητα ἐκτείνεται πέρα ἀπὸ τὰ ὅρια τοῦ φυσικοῦ κόσμου, γιατί ἡ λογικὴ δύναμη ἐπιτρέπει σ' αὐτὴν νὰ πλησιάσῃ τὰ νοητὰ ὄντα.

Ἡ ἔννοια ὅμως τοῦ νοουμένου ἐπιτρέπει μόνον τὴ δυνατότητα τῆς ἀντικειμενικῆς του πραγματικότητας, ἐφ' ὅσον ἐκτείνεται πέρα ἀπὸ τὸν αἰσθητὸ κόσμο. Κατὰ συνέπεια ἡ πραγματικότητά του δὲν μπορεῖ νὰ γίνῃ ἀντιληπτή, ἐπειδὴ ἡ νοητικὴ ἀντίληψή μας εἶναι περιορισμένη. Κι ἀκόμη δὲν μποροῦμε νὰ σκεφθοῦμε ὅτι ἓνα τέτοιο λογικὸ ἀντικείμενο μπορεῖ κὰν νὰ γίνῃ ἀντιληπτὸ ἀπὸ τὸν νοῦ μας. Ἡ σκέψη, ποὺ ἐπιτρέπει νὰ λάβῃ χώρα τὸ νοούμενο, νοεῖται μόνον ὡς «κενὸς χώρος» (empty space) γιὰ τὸν περιορισμὸ τῶν ἐμπειρικῶν ἀρχῶν, χωρὶς ἄλλο συγκεκριμένο γνωστικὸ ἀντικείμενο.

Ἐν τούτοις ὁ «κενὸς» αὐτὸς χώρος πληρώνεται στὴν *Κριτικὴ τοῦ πρακτικοῦ λόγου* μὲ τὴν ἔννοια τῆς ἐλευθερίας, τὴν ὁποία ὁ Kant χρησιμοποιεῖ γιὰ νὰ ἀνακαλύψῃ τὸν πνευματικὸ κόσμο τῆς νοητῆς πραγματικότητας (noumenal reality) καὶ νὰ λύσῃ τὸ πρόβλημα τῆς ἔννοιας τοῦ νοουμένου. Αὐτὸν τὸν ὑπεραισθητὸ κόσμο τῆς νοητῆς ἐλευθερίας (noumenal freedom) ὁ Kant ἐπιχειρεῖ νὰ τὸν ἐξηγήσῃ μὲ τὴν ἀποκάλυψη ποὺ γίνεται ἀπὸ τὸν πρακτικὸ λόγον. Μὲ τὸν ἠθικὸ νόμον, ὅπως μᾶς τὸν ὑπαγορεύει ὁ πρακτικὸς λόγος, γνωρίζομε τὸν νοητὸ κόσμον, ἀφοῦ κατανοήσωμε τὴν ἔννοια τῆς μεταφυσικῆς ἐλευθερίας. Ἡ νοητὴ πραγματικότητα προϋποθέτει τὴν ἐλευθερία τοῦ ἀνθρώπου, ὁ ὁποῖος ὡς λογικὸ ὄν ἀπολαμβάνει τὴν νοητὴ ἐλευθερία μὲ τὴν δύναμη τοῦ λόγου του. Ὁ ἄνθρωπος μπορεῖ νὰ στερῇ τὴν φυσικὴ ἐλευθερία, λογικὰ ὅμως παραμένει ἐλεύθερος.

Τελικὰ ὁ Kant ἐνῶ ἐξετάζει καὶ ἀναλύει συστηματικὰ τὴν ἔννοια τοῦ νοουμένου, θεωρεῖ τὴν μορφή του διαφορετικὴ ἀπὸ τὴν ἀντίστοιχη τῶν κατηγοριῶν, καὶ γι' αὐτὸ ἡ γνώση τοῦ νοουμένου εἶναι προβληματική. Ὁ Hegel παρατηρεῖ ὅτι τὰ νοούμενα ὡς πράγματα καθ' ἑαυτὰ δὲν μποροῦν νὰ γίνουν γνωστὰ μὲ τίς κατηγορίες τοῦ Kant, γιατί αὐτὲς δὲν ἀπευθύνονται στὰ νοούμενα, ἀφοῦ διαφέρουν στὴ μορφή τους. Οἱ κατηγορίες τοῦ Kant ὡς μορφὲς τῆς νοήσεως δὲν μποροῦν νὰ συλλάβουν τὴν ἔννοια τοῦ νοουμένου, γιατί αὐτὸ εἶναι μορφή τοῦ λόγου (form of reason). Ἀλλ' ὁ Hegel παρατηρεῖ ὅτι καὶ οἱ κατηγορίες εἶναι μορφὲς τοῦ λόγου καὶ ἐπομένως μποροῦν νὰ ἀπευθύνουν τὸν ἑαυτό τους στὰ νοούμενα. Γιατὶ τὸ νοούμενο ὡς πρᾶγμα καθ' αὐτὸ φέρνει τὸ χαρακτηριστικὸ σημεῖο τῶν κατηγοριῶν,

ἐφ' ὅσον μάλιστα εἶναι ἀντικείμενο τοῦ λόγου πού παράγεται ἀπὸ τὴν κενὴ ταυτότητα τοῦ «Ἐγὼ» (empty self-identity of the "ego"). Τὸ «Ἐγὼ» ἀπὸ τὴν δική του κενὴ ταυτότητα σχηματίζει τὸ ἀντικείμενο τοῦ λόγου, δηλαδή τὸ νοούμενο. Ἡ ἔννοια τοῦ νοουμένου ἔχει ἀρνητικὸ χαρακτήρα, ὁ ὅποιος περιέχει τὸ χαρακτηριστικὸ σημεῖο τῆς κατηγορίας τῆς ἀρνήσεως, πού ἐκφράζει τὴν πραγματικότητα. Τὸ νοούμενο εἶναι λοιπὸν πρᾶγμα καθ' αὐτὸ ἐφ' ὅσον νοεῖται χωριστὰ ἀπὸ τὴν ἐμφάνισή του, καὶ ὅταν γίνῃ γνωστό, ἀποκτᾷ τὴν νοητὴ πραγματικότητά του. Συνεπῶς ὁ Hegel μὲ τὴν ἐφαρμογὴ τῆς κατηγορίας τῆς ἀρνήσεως στὸ νοούμενο προσφέρει μία ἱκανοποιητικὴ λύση στὴν προβληματικὴ τῆς καντιανῆς ἔννοιας τοῦ νοουμένου, ἐπειδὴ ἡ κατηγορία αὐτὴ ἐκφράζει τὸν τρόπο τῆς ὑπάρξεώς του.

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Athanasios P. Fotinis

