

## *Transcendental Philosophy As Theory Of Limit*

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It would not be an exaggeration in saying that Kant is the most influential founder of European modernity and the Enlightenment rationality. Kant and Kantianism have made great stir; not only in the fields of epistemology, metaphysics, morality and aesthetics, but also in such areas as Phenomenology, Philosophy of Science, Dialectics, Analytic Philosophy and so on. Not only that Kant has influenced his philosophical successors like Fichte, Schelling, Hegel, Schopenhauer, Marx, Engels and Lenin; but his philosophy has made tremendous impact on the poststructuralist Foucault, deconstructionist Derrida, Critical Theorists like Adorno, Horkheimer, Marcuse and Habermas. There are several reactions to Kantianism; such as the dialectic of Hegel, irrationalism of Schopenhauer, the psychological reactions of Herbert and Beneke, the theological reactions of Weisse and Schleiermacher and the materialist reactions of David Strauss, Feuerbach, Marx, Engels and Lenin. Even the present-day Kant scholars associate themselves to either of these reactions. Likewise, J.N. Findlay, Charles Taylor, M.J. Inwood, R.B. Pippin react to Kant from Hegelian point of view and Alexandre Kojève, Adorno, Herbert Marcuse, Habermas and George Lukacs have strongly reacted to Kant from the Marxist point of view.

In the above, I have mixed great many issues. In what follows, I shall try to sort them out. In order to organize my discussion, I'll divide my paper into three parts: In part-I, I'll expound Kant's *a-priorism* as the transcendental basis for 'theory of limit' along with Newton's influences on Kant's 'theory of limit'. I'll also discuss his Enlightenment rationality as one of the Grand Narratives of European modernity. In Part-II, I shall discuss how the dialectic of Hegel overcomes Kant's transcendental basis for Limitation. Finally, in Part-III, I'll critically examine Kant's notions of transcendental consciousness, categories and representation from the perspectives of poststructuralist Foucault and deconstructionist Derrida. I'll argue that it is Kant's transcendental approach into human cognitive capability that has culminated into 'a theory of limit'. I'll propose a dialectical emendation, which regards 'limitation' as an aspect of the dynamism through which the reality undergoes.

My thesis will be a dialectical dialogue, which is not simply *dia-logos* but also *multi-logos*. It will incorporate limitation in terms of pluralism repudiating monism, absolutism or totalitarianism. A dialectical dialogue with the operative terms of limitation and pluralism could be used as a method to facilitate dialogues between persons, identities, communities, ethnicities, cultures and civilizations.

# I

In *Critique of Pure Reason*, Immanuel Kant says:

"I have therefore found it necessary to limit *knowledge*, in order to make room for *faith*."

"Appearances, so far as they are thought as objects according to the unity of the categories, are called *phenomena*. But, if I postulate things which are mere objects of understanding and which, nevertheless, can be given as an intuition ... Such things would be called noumena (*intelligibilia*)."  
(CPR, A 249).

"...the concept of noumenon is necessary to prevent sensible intuition from being extended to things in themselves, and thus to limit the objective validity of sensible knowledge."  
(CPR, B310).

"The order and regularity in the appearances, which we entitle nature, we ourselves introduce."  
(CPR, A125).

Limitation is an epistemic category for Kant, but it does have an ontological and methodological basis. It is the transcendental consciousness with transcendental method that it creates a limitation between knowledge and faith, phenomenon and noumenon, appearance and thing-in-itself, is and ought, and so on. Kant's *apriorism* is the transcendental basis for Limitation. In the second part of *Critique of Pure Reason* entitled as "Transcendental Analytic", under the heading "Transcendental Deduction of Concepts", Kant introduces the category of 'Limitation'. It has been derived from the Infinite Judgment under the Quality of the Table of Judgments. The other two judgments are Affirmative and Negative. An Affirmative judgment is like 'All men are mortal' and the concept derived from this judgment is 'reality'. Likewise, a negative judgment is like 'No crows are white' and the concept derived from this judgment is 'negation'. Now an Infinite judgment is like 'Hydrogen gas is not...green'. It has two aspects; namely, (a) Hydrogen gas

has a colour other than green, (b) It has no colour at all. It is under this kind of judgment that Kant introduces 'limitation'. In other words, if we come across a theory/situation where the concepts of 'reality' and 'negation' cannot be applied, the only way out then is to apply the concept of 'limitation'. There is yet another judgment under the Relation known as Disjunctive which is like 'Earth exists either through an inner necessity, or through an external cause, or through a blind chance'. This judgment has three propositions, which mutually exclude each other but jointly somehow they give us complete knowledge. The mutual exclusion is another feature of limitation and Kant has derived the concept of 'Community' from that judgment.

To elaborate the concept of 'limitation', we have to go into the details of Kant's epistemological and metaphysical position; particularly the distinction he has drawn between 'reason', 'understanding' and 'sensibility'. Kant says,

"All our knowledge starts with the senses, proceeds from thence to understanding, and ends with reason, beyond which there is no higher faculty to be found in us for elaborating the matter of intuition and bringing it into the highest unity of thought." (CPR, B 355 / A 299).

Let us elaborate the nature and status of 'reason' within the general Kantian epistemological situation. As a matter of fact, Kant distinguishes 'reason' from 'understanding'. Reason is never in immediate relation to objects given in sensibility. It is understanding that holds sway in Kant's epistemology. Reason is concerned with the understanding and its judgments. The understanding throughout the use of categories and principles unifies the manifolds supplied by the sensibility. Reason seeks to unify the concepts and judgments of understanding. Whereas understanding is directly related to sensibility, reason relates itself to sensibility only indirectly through understanding. As understanding with the categories unifies perceptions, so understanding needs higher unity-the unity of reason in order to form a connected system. This is supplied to it by the ideas of reason-freedom of will, immortality of soul and the existence of God. These ideas have their use and value as the guides to the understanding. In Kant's terminology, the ideas of reason are 'regulative' rather than 'constitutive'.

Why was Kant tempted by the view that our knowledge springs from two fundamental sources of the mind? Perhaps the following remark by Kant about two of his philosophical precursors can provide us sufficient explanation.

"In a word, Leibniz intellectualized appearances, just as

Locke...*sensualised* all concepts of understanding... Instead of seeking in understanding and sensibility two sources of representations, which, while quite different, can supply objectively valid judgments of things only in conjunction with each other..."(CPR, A 271 / B 327).

Kant, therefore, takes up the view that only the claim about knowledge based on two sources could take us beyond the rationalist and empiricist errors. This theme of the dual sources of our knowledge is perhaps nowhere more clearly expressed than in Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason*:

'The understanding can intuit nothing, the senses can think nothing...But that is no reason for confounding the contribution of either with that of the other; rather it is a strong reason for carefully separating and distinguishing the one from the other and then relating them with each other.'

The centerpiece of Kant's epistemology lies in the notion of 'transcendental unity of self-consciousness. That notion is required as the non-perceptual source of universality and necessity in our cognition. Kant, while agreeing with Hume that these features cannot be found in experiences, refuses to, along the lines of the latter, to draw a skeptical conclusion. Kant, therefore, demonstrates that the 'transcendental consciousness' consists of the 'forms of intuition' (space and time) and 'forms of understanding' (the concepts) which are not static forms but forms of operation that exist only in the act of apprehending and comprehending sensibility. The forms of intuition synthesize the manifold of sensibility into spatio-temporal order. By virtue of the categories, they are brought to the universal and necessary relations of cause and effect, substance, quality, limitation, etc. And this entire complex is unified in the 'transcendental consciousness', which relates all experience to the 'thinking ego', thereby giving experience the continuity of being 'my' experience. The 'transcendental consciousness' is the matrix, the ultimate source through which the order and regularity in the field of appearance is given. The knowledge that comes out is what Kant calls synthetic *a priori*. As synthetic, it amplifies the concept of subject in the predicate and as *a priori*, it expresses universality and necessity. What we require in knowledge is such ampliative knowledge with the characteristics of universality and necessity. But knowledge as synthetic *a-priori*, Kant warns, has a 'limit' i.e., it is limited to the phenomenal world and it cannot penetrate into the noumenal world; i.e., the ideas of reason, like immortality of soul, freedom of will and existence of God. Here Kant proposes a critique of pure reason. He says,

"Human reason has this peculiar fate that in one species of its knowledge, it is burdened by questions which as prescribed by the very nature of reason itself; it is not able to ignore, but which as transcending all its powers, it is not able to answer." (*CPR*, Preface, A vii).

The formulation of scientific knowledge in terms of possibility, validity and limit, Kant is essentially following Newton. N.K.Smith tells us,

"Newton, he (Kant) believes, has determined in a quite final manner the principles, methods and limits of scientific investigation."<sup>1</sup>

Though Kant does not mention Newton at all, yet he attempts to defend Newton against Hume's skepticism. This shows his 'reverence'<sup>2</sup> for Newton. Kant's commitment in the first *Critique* is to show how synthetic *a-priori* judgment is possible and in the first two sections of the *Critique*, Kant is concerned with Newtonian physics. Kant, however, does not commit himself in Transcendental Aesthetic either to Leibniz's view that space and time are relative or to Newton's view that space and time are absolute. But Kant certainly makes a number of extremely Newtonian observations. 'We can never represent to ourselves the absence of space, though we can quite well think it as empty of object' (*CPR*, A24/B38). 'We cannot...remove time itself, though we can quite well think time as void of appearances' (*CPR*, A31/B46). 'Space is represented as an infinite *given* magnitude' (*CPR*, A25/B39). 'The original representation, *time*, must therefore be given as unlimited' (*CPR*, A32/B48). Despite these similarities, Kant is not willing to embrace Newton and he declares space and time as 'mind-dependent' (*CPR*, A42/B59).

Curiously, in several pre-critical works, Kant has decidedly drawn Newtonian conclusions. In 1768, in a paper "Concerning the Ultimate Foundation of the Differentiation of Regions in Space", Kant says,

"...the determinations of space are not consequences of the situations of the parts of matter relative to each other; rather the latter are the consequences of the former. It is also clear that in the constitution of bodies differences at that can be found; and these differences are connected purely with *absolute and original space*, for it is only through it that the relation of physical things is possible."<sup>3</sup>

But in the *Inaugural Dissertation* of 1770, in which we see the first sign of the critical philosophy, he rejects space as 'an *absolute* and boundless receptacle of possible things' (*Ibid.*, p. 39).

In the *Prolegomena* of 1783, Kant's transcendental idealist solution as against Newton's realist solution of the problem comes out.

"Those who cannot yet rid themselves of the notion that space and time are actual qualities inherent in things in themselves may exercise their acumen on the problem of incongruous counterparts. When they have in vain attempted its solution and free from prejudices at least for a few moments, they will suspect that the degradation of space and time to mere forms of our sensuous intuition may perhaps be well founded."<sup>4</sup>

Kant emphasizes on a perceiver, with the human faculty of representation, whose forms of intuition are space and time. Despite these differences Kant's basic aim has been to justify Newtonian physics between two contending schools of thought, namely, the radical skepticism of Hume and the ambitious rationalism of Descartes, *et al.* To justify Newtonian physics, Kant wanted to show that mathematics and physics yield synthetic *a-priori* knowledge of the world, whereas metaphysics does not. Thus, the general topics of the three Analogies—substance, causality and reciprocity correspond to Newtonian concepts of matter, force and reaction. Kant's general project in the first *Critique* regarding the necessary conditions for the possibility of knowledge is precisely about the basic presuppositions of Euclidean geometry, simple arithmetic and Newtonian physics. Our knowledge of the world, Kant would agree, must be such that it obeys the theorems of arithmetic, and is Euclidean and Newtonian. Newton's absolutistic-mechanistic-realistic frame consistently adheres to Cartesian-Galilean tradition. Newton was basically interested in explaining all phenomena in nature in terms of matter, force and reaction. Newton defines matter only through its effects on our senses and he defines density only as mass per unit volume. He draws a distinction between mass and weight. Mass, being a measure of the body's resistance of acceleration, undergoes a change in its state of motion or rest. This is its inertia of bodies. Mass is also a measure of its response to a given gravitational field. It seems Kant was greatly under the influence of Newton's concept of matter. In the First Analogy, Kant tells us that there must be a permanent substance, and from his discussion of the analogy in the first *Critique* and from his definition of matter in the *Metaphysical Foundations of Natural Science* 1776, it is quite clear that he conceived the scientific notion of substance as matter. In the latter work, Kant defines matter as "the mobile in so far as it fills a space, has moving power and can become an object of experience."<sup>5</sup> Kant's Second Analogy concerning the law of causality presupposes his First Analogy. But before we come to that, let us further develop Newton's concept of matter and



causality.

Galileo was the first to have introduced the important distinction between primary and secondary qualities in the material things. Descartes, Newton and Locke incorporated it. Following Galileo, Newton draws a distinction between primary qualities, such as extension and inertia, which lend themselves to mathematical measurement and formulations, and the secondary qualities, such as colour, taste, etc., which are sensations induced by the primary qualities. Newton's aim was to explain physical reality in terms of cause-effect relationship and as Einstein points out

"...we have to realize that before Newton there existed no self-contained system of physical causality which was somehow capable of representing any of the deeper features of the empirical world. ...Actual results of a kind to support the belief in the existence of a complete chain of physical causation hardly existed before Newton."<sup>6</sup>

Newton's basic philosophical preoccupation was to answer the question: is there a rule by which one can calculate the movement of the heavenly bodies in our planetary system completely, when the state of motion of all these bodies at one moment is known? Galileo had raised this question and has made significant progress towards knowledge of the law of motion. His discovery of the law of inertia and the law of bodies falling freely in the gravitational field of the earth, that is, a mass which is unaffected by other masses moves uniformly and in a straight line, made an everlasting impact on Newton's law of motion. Newton also accepted Galileo's conclusion that the vertical speed of a free body in the gravitational field increases uniformly with time. But these are very general laws of motion, whereas, Newton was preoccupied with the specificity of the law of motion. This was the requirement for a causal concept of motion.

"Newton conceived the idea that the force operating on a mass was determined by the position of all masses situated at sufficiently small distance from the mass in question. It was not till this connection was established that a completely causal concept of motion was achieved."<sup>7</sup>

Kant, in the Second Analogy, develops a similar position stating 'wherever there is action-and therefore activity and force-there is also substance, and it is in substance that the relation of cause and effect in appearances must be sought'. Kant's Third Analogy states that 'all substances in so far as they are perceived as coexistent in space are in thorough going interaction'. Kant means

that every material thing is in constant interaction with each other though they seem to be co-existent. This is what Newton's law of motion has already developed in detail. However, for Newton, the whole burden of philosophy was to arrive at the First Cause of the System of the World. Like Galileo, Newton was also a convinced theist. With his awareness of the limitations of scientific knowledge, Newton frequently refers to God as the First Cause. This might have a reference to Cartesian dualism or Locke's dualism and perhaps, more pronouncedly, of Kant's attempt to vindicate God of religion without giving up the basic framework of the Newtonian physics. Kant's general project in the *Critique* 'to limit knowledge in order to justify morality' is essentially Newtonian in its inspiration. Kant's formulation of the problem of causality in terms of 'schematized' and 'unschematised' brings him to a dualism of phenomena and noumena whereas Newton presents a unified world-view ascribing its origin and intelligibility to God, the First Cause. Kant, different from Newton, rejects the cosmological proof for the existence of God and attempts to justify the empirical world-the world of science-in the constitutive structure of understanding and understanding is itself a function of the transcendental self in which the unity of the physical world is grounded. But the spontaneity in the cognitive act of the transcendental consciousness is limited to the phenomenal world in which there is no freedom.

In the Transcendental Dialectic, therefore, Kant applies the concept of 'limitation' on human reason-the world has a beginning; it has no beginning, and so on, right up to the fourth; there is freedom in man, *versus* there is no freedom-that human reason can neither comprehend nor reject. Kant presents a self-critique of reason itself, a critique in which reason is both the subject and the object of critique in order to resolve certain contradictions, which create a conflict of reason with itself. It is the self-critique of reason that makes reason self-reflective or the self-reflection of reason upon the conditions of its employment. The limit riddled constitution of pure reason necessitates the emergence not only of practical reason for moral pursuits but also of judgment for aesthetic experiences. Kant's transcendental philosophy has given rise to three 'theories of limit' in the three *Critiques*. Pure reason can self-reflexively come to grasp the possibility, validity and limit of synthetic *a-priori* knowledge. Practical reason can self-reflexively come to autonomous free will in the maxims of universality; end in itself and kingdom of ends. And the Judgment can discern what is beautiful and the sublime. There is an emancipatory sense of self-critique and self-reflection in Kant's transcendental philosophy.



This concept could further be elaborated with the help of Kant's brief but seminal article in the *Berlinischer Monatsschrift*, December 1783 issue, entitled *Beantwortung der Frage: Was ist Aufklärung?* Or "Answer to the Question: What is the Enlightenment?" His answer: "*Aufklärung ist der Ausgang des Menschen aus seiner Selbst-verschuldeten Unmündigkeit*". Let me give his full answer in English; I confess my inability to give a totality word-to-word translation: "Enlightenment is the coming out of man from his self-imposed immaturity. Immaturity is the incapacity to serve one's own understanding without direction (*Leitung*) from another. This immaturity is self-imposed; Reason itself languishes, not because it lacks understanding; what it lacks is resolution and courage; it is unwilling to serve itself (*Sapere Aude! Habe Mut*). Take courage to serve your own understanding! This is therefore the Motto (*Wahlspruch*) of the Enlightenment."<sup>8</sup> Until enlightenment, the integrating intellectual principle was the belief in God. It was in theology that all human problems in experience were integrated. Now the enlightenment threw out that integrating principle-the religion as the matrix of thought process. In that place enlightenment put the human reason which could integrate everything. This was the basic change which European enlightenment brought. I myself do not subscribe to that theology as integrating element. But once you subscribe to enlightenment reason, you find that the integrating principle does not fully work. So you divide 'experience' into three compartments-science, ethics and art. In the new enlightenment thinking, technically it is human reason that reconciles the three. But that integration is very flimsy. It does not have adequate foundation. Immanuel Kant particularly was the one who was trying to distinguish between three kinds of reason-pure reason, practical reason and the judgment. In the one, you know the things (phenomena); in the other, you know how to act; in the third, you have to discern what is good. By making this separation, he held on the 'idea of reason', which was already divided in three compartments. European enlightenment has this problem that 'reason' as such is not able to fulfill the task of integrating everything. But the enlightenment was able to assert on the 'autonomy' and 'adulthood' (maturity). According to the evolutionary ideology, which was going through that time, humanity has been developing into three phases; one is the religious stage, the second stage is metaphysics. These two stages are the stages of 'immaturity' of humanity. Humanity becomes 'mature' when its knowledge becomes 'scientific' which is the third stage. Science is the mature form of human dealing with reality. Both religion and metaphysics belong to the 'childhood' of humanity. Maturity means repudiating religion and metaphysics. The positive thing is that it affirms humanity. The attempt to get rid of 'self-

imposed immaturity' is both self-critique and self-reflection with the aim to attain emancipation. Emancipatory self-reflection is dependent on giving a rational reconstruction of the universal conditions for reason. To use the Kantian analogy, only when we understand the possibility, validity and limit of theoretical knowledge and the categorical imperatives does it become intelligible to specify what must be done to attain autonomy and emancipation. This immaturity is self-imposed, because Reason itself languishes, not in lack of understanding, but only of resolve and courage to serve oneself without direction from another. That's why Kant says that *Sapere aude*, think boldly, take courage, and use your own Understanding to serve. In other words, Enlightenment develops reason to the extent that it becomes autonomous and gets rid of restraints from tradition and authority. The way to enlightenment, Kant emphasizes, is not to seek a mentor or an authority in Thinking, in Willing, and in Feeling. Kant has placed freedom and maturity (*Muendigkeit*) at the center of Enlightenment and contrasted it from tutelage. In an uncharacteristic manner, Kant says, "when the question is asked: do we live in an enlightened epoch (*Zeitalter der Aufklaerung*) then the answer is: No, but rather in an epoch of Enlightenment (*Zeitalter<sup>s</sup> der Aufklaerung*)." (ibid. p. 96) 'Reason', the supreme faculty, has an emancipatory goal. But this is contrasted by the *a priorism* of the faculty of understanding, which can vindicate only a limited theory.

## II

### ***Hegel's Dialectic: Overcoming Kant's Transcendental basis for Limitation***

The limit-riddled constitution of human cognition in Kant's transcendental philosophy remains a problematic for all the post-Kantian philosophers. Fichte and Schelling sought a concept of pure-ego as self-reflectedness that would overcome the problems of a 'theory of limit' resulting in Kantian dualisms. Fichte took up the principle that the ego posits the non-ego because this is the condition of consciousness. It would render the dualism, a distinction deriving from the ego's own original act of self-positing. Hegel too makes this principle as his own.

In the context of Kant's transcendental philosophy as a 'theory of limit', Hegel goes on to note three points that worry him. First, Hegel criticizes Kant's

theory of sensation in terms that it is undialectical.<sup>9</sup> Secondly, he criticizes Kant's goal that we have to know our faculty of knowledge-categories-before we have any knowledge.<sup>10</sup> Thirdly, despite words of praise for Kant's 'transcendental consciousness', Hegel also criticizes Kant for denying the knowledge of the 'transcendental consciousness'.<sup>11</sup> To overcome 'theory of limit', Hegel proposes that all reality is at least potentially and in principle accessible to cognition. No part of it is in principle unknowable forever and necessarily walled off from cognition in Kantian fashion behind the veil of appearances. Hegel directs a powerful polemic against the epistemological gap between man and nature. And the final argument is this:

"...how can there be any thing beyond knowledge, that is, beyond mind or *Geist*, for *Geist* turns out ultimately to be identical with the whole or reality."<sup>12</sup>

Hegel accepts and further develops Kant's distinction between sensibility, understanding, and reason. The sense-certainty and understanding can present nothing but what Hegel calls a complex of fixed disparate. There lies unity between finite and its negativity. To restore the unity is the object of the reason.

"The process of unifying the opposites touches every part of reality and comes to an end only when reason has organized the whole so that every part exists only in relation to the whole and every individual entity has meaning and significance only in its relation to the totality."<sup>13</sup>

In the process of unifying the opposite, reason negates the finite and its negation, and binds them together on mutual defense, so that they are revealed as moments of a more inclusive whole. But the whole is nothing other than the essence consummating itself through its development. This is further emphasized like this: "What is rational is actual and what is actual is rational".<sup>14</sup> There is however a dialectical unity between rationality and reality. This is the most significant departure from Kant's 'limited theory' to Hegel's 'dialectical theory'. Hegel has developed dialectical logic as against Kant's separation between dialectic and logic. In Kant's dialectic, there is a sophisticated use of logic in pretending to prove false or ungrounded views of the opponents. This is the meaning Kant has derived from Socrates' dialogues. Just as in Socrates' dialogues with *Theaetetus*<sup>15</sup> there is a movement of thought through criticism. Similarly, dialectic for Kant is the critical movement of thought, or, self-criticism of reason itself. In dialogue, both the speakers are related to each other like the subject and predicate in a proposition. In dialectic, as already explained in Part-I, reason is both the subject and predicate of the

critique, a self-critique of reason itself to vindicate a 'limited theory'. Hegel tries to overcome 'limitations' at all levels.

"The concept's moving principle, which alike engenders and dissolves the particularizations of the universal, I call 'dialectic'... The dialectic of the concept consists not simply in producing the determination as a contrary and a restriction, but in producing and seizing upon the positive content and outcome of the determination."<sup>16</sup>

Hegel proposes two operative terms of dialectic; namely, sublation (*aufheben*) and contradiction. Sublation means to resolve into a higher unity above limitations or to bring into the wholeness that which is fragmentary. The deduction of categories from one another in the *Science of Logic* shows that all lower categories are sublated into the higher ones and they have a direct reference to the wholeness. To substantiate this point, I would like to take up Hegel's analysis of Kant's distinction between 'understanding' and 'reason'. Hegel undoubtedly acknowledges Kant's Transcendental Dialectic as his greatest contribution to philosophy; both for its basic distinction between understanding and reason, and for his insight in the nature of our attempt to apply our concepts to the absolute unconditioned and thus opening the era of 'theory of limit'. The Kantian antinomies, as 'theories of limit', effect the fall of the previous metaphysics by examining the finitude of the contents of the categories. However, Hegel has expressed apprehensions to Kant's 'theory of limit' in his early works<sup>17</sup> and as his works have proceeded this doubt has become something very strong. Hegel's *aufheben* has the moment of transcendence in which it goes beyond a 'limit' or 'boundary'. Further, *aufheben* is negation of the first negation, this 'limit' in which it is the moment of 'preservation', in which what has been 'gone beyond' or transcended is brought again into a new relation. Hegel proposes that the function of understanding-through the process of abstraction-is to present contradiction between individual and universal, identity and difference, and so on. The function of reason is to make manifest the concrete relation in which an idea, a concept or reality subsists with all its dynamism. Kant argues that the function of reason is to draw a limit to the extent of the concepts of understanding. Hegel's criticism of Kant's concept of reason is that while recognizing the dialectical character of reason, Kant's concept of reason fails to overcome the antinomies between finite and infinite, etc., i.e. the 'theory of limit'. Hegel regards reason as the indispensable corrective to the deficiencies of understanding. In the process of unifying the opposites, reason sublates the

finite and the infinite, so that they are revealed as moments of more inclusive whole.

### III

#### *Postmodern Reactions to Kant*

Before I come to re-assess the charges leveled by postmodernists, I would like to recapitulate briefly the relation of post-modernity to modernity. No post-modernist will say that post-modernity is a denial of modernity. They say: it is a reconstruction, a reinterpretation, and an attempt to give a new meaning to modernity. This is what the spokesman of post-modernity, Jean-Francois Lyotard says, "The whole idea of postmodernism is perhaps better rethought under the rubric of rewriting modernity."<sup>18</sup> Post-modernity of the post-structuralist, deconstructionist and the Critical Theory retain many aspects of the Kantian-Hegelian modernity, yet they reject the norms of strict logic and rationality, which characterize the latter. This relationship could further be analyzed on the basis of the *Central* and the *Marginal* issues in modernity.

At the centre of modernity are such issues as human subjectivity (the *cogito*, the transcendental consciousness and the *Geist*), rationality, unity, science, morality, freedom and so on; whereas at the margins of modernity are such issues as madness, fantasy, demon, deception, sexuality, pluralism, discontinuity, irrationality and fragmentation. Post-modernity underestimates the *Central* issues of modernity and overestimates the *Marginal* issues. In post-modernity, reality follows diverse models, which are rich in conflicts, history is viewed from ruptures and mutations, and there is a radical negation of totalitarian thinking. In marginalizing, delimiting, disseminating and de-centering the Central works of modernist inscriptions, the postmodernists, I feel, have expanded the horizons of modernity.

Modernity breaks with the endless reiteration of traditional (classical) themes, topics and myths; and post-modernity operates at the places of closure in modernity, at the margins of what proclaims itself to be new and breaks with tradition. To be modern means to search for new self-conscious expressive forms. To be postmodern is to marginalize, delimit, disseminate and de-center the primary and often secondary works of modernist inscriptions. It implies that the line of demarcation between modernity and post-modernity remains a matter of uncertainty because post-modernity operates at the edge of modernity. We shall now come to some of the stalwarts of the post-modernity.

In 1979 Jean-Francois Lyotard was assigned by the Canadian Government to compile, assess and critically evaluate the intellectual climate in the most advanced countries of the Western Europe and U.S.A. There Lyotard, as a point of departure, uses the term 'postmodern' to describe that climate. In *Driftworks*, for example, Lyotard inveighs against modernist reason as the main instrument of repression and stresses the freeplay of both language and action that leads to 'plurality of singularities'.<sup>19</sup> He proceeds to analyze the changes and transformations that took place since the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century in the fields of philosophy, science, literature, politics, art, etc. This he terms as 'the crisis of narratives'. These narratives are the reflections of the modernist conceptual framework in which a criterion or a standard or a legitimation with reference to its own system is designed. This could be an appeal to a Grand Narrative such as the Dialectic of Spirit (Hegel), Emancipation of the Rational Subject (Enlightenment Rationality of Kant) or the Working Subject (Marx). As against this Lyotard defines post-modern as 'incredulity towards meta-narratives'. Any statement of conclusion needs to be placed in the context of validation criterion. Post-modernity is an end of the validation criterion. In *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge*, Lyotard has emphasized on similar concern on developments in modern science, catastrophe theory, chaos theory and so on, all of which display, he thinks, the bankruptcy of traditional forms of epistemology.

Post-modernity could be defined as an 'attitude' or a 'mood' or a 'Movement'. Modernity could be defined as an 'ism'; i.e., 'a clear set of ideas' and a program of action based on it. Post-modernity is not a systematic thing where one can develop concepts and relationships, precisely that is what the postmodernists are against. In modernity, everything is a system like 'foundationalism', 'essentialism', 'teleology', 'rationalism', 'freedom', 'logocentrism' and so on. I would like to dwell little more on the question of what is the relation of post-modernity to modernity. Modern means something, which is not traditional, "To be modern is to break with the past and to search for new self-conscious expressive forms."<sup>20</sup> The transition from the tradition to the modernity consists in the fact that the centre shifted from *religion* to *human reason*. The beginning of modernity can be traced to that intellectual fervor that spread in Europe from the middle of the 18<sup>th</sup> century. The French Revolution of 1789 was the high point in the spread of this intellectual-spiritual as well as political-economic-social ferment in western society. We have a long list of philosophers who are moderns; such as, Descartes, Bacon, Galileo, Newton, Hume, Kant, Hegel, Marx, Mill, Comte, and so on. The basic philosophical quests in modernism are that 'man can be an interpreter of the



world' (Bacon), an observer of nature through an instrument such as the telescope and the mathematical foundation of the world (Cartesian-Galilean mechanics), Universal law of gravitation and the three laws of motion (Newton), 'understanding makes nature' (Kant), 'what is rational is actual and what is actual is rational' (Hegel), 'the point however is to change the world' (Marx)—in a nutshell, one can shape and control the world through science is what inaugurates the modern world-view. Behind that drive there lays an absolute confidence in the capacity of unaided and autonomous human reason to solve all puzzles and remove the veil of mystery from reality. Reason alone can make the objective reality under human control through science and technology.

The post-modernity, on the other hand, wants to ignore even the present, in order to make a creative leap into the future untamed by laws, norms and institutions which are dominating the modernist society. Post-modernity is certainly not anti-modern in the sense of being backward looking. It does not want to reinstate the norms of religion and tradition which modernism repudiated. Nor does it want to abide by the norms of modernity—especially the emphasis on system-prone thinking and logical rationality. The stalwarts of post-modernity are the irrationalism of Nietzsche, the structuralism of anthropologist Claude Levi-Strauss, the cultural semiologist Ronald Barthes, the psychoanalytic theorist Jacques Lacan, the poststructuralist Michel Foucault, the deconstructionist Jacques Derrida, Levinas, Richard Rorty, critical theorists like Max Horkheimer, Adorno, Marcuse, Jürgen Habermas and others, but each in his own way.

What is held to be common to the disparate thinkers of post-modernity is a belief, though it is expressed in various ways, that in the present-day intellectual climate, we are observing a general crisis of 'philosophy'. In other words, we are facing

"a series of crises... in which older modes of defining, appropriating and recomposing the objects of artistic, philosophical, literary and social scientific languages are no longer credible and in which one common aspect is the dissolution of the very boundary between the language and its object".<sup>21</sup>

Stephen White has suggested that what he calls 'postmodern problematic' consists of four interrelated phenomena:

"the increasing incredulity towards meta-narratives, the growing awareness of new problems wrought by societal rationalism, the explosion of new informational technologies and the emergence of

new social movements".<sup>22</sup>

Richard Rorty has brought the postmodern claim about knowledge, language and the world like this - the modernist assumption was that we had a 'glassy essence' that could be rationally perceived and interpreted through particular techniques and through which we could perceive the world but postmodernism smashes that glass.

Given the above, post-modernity is, of its very nature, 'philosophical'. Let us take, for example, one of the key areas of postmodern discourse regarding philosophy - the notion of subjectivity. The post-moderns view modernity as having developed a particular view of this idea, beginning with (according to taste) Machiavelli, Descartes and/or Hobbes (I regard Descartes as the father of modernist subjectivity). As White has put it,

"[in modernity] the individual subject is conceived of as an isolated mind and will... the modern world, says Derrida, stands under the imperative of giving a rational account of everything; or as Foucault more ominously puts it, of interrogating everything... it manifests itself finally in the twentieth century as a 'will to planetary order'[White is here citing Lyotard]"<sup>23</sup>

With this formulation, let us now turn to Foucault.

Foucault notes that modern philosophical reflection especially that of Kant, is preoccupied with 'man'. He says,

"...before the end of the eighteenth century, Man did not exist and that he will disappear with the (apparently imminent) collapse of the modern episteme."<sup>24</sup>

To develop modernist's notion of man, I would like to turn to Richard Rorty's consideration of the dispute between Cardinal Bellarmine and Galileo. For, as Rorty explains,

"Much of the seventeenth century's notion of what it was to be a 'philosopher' and much of the Enlightenment's notion of what it was to be 'rational' turns on Galileo's being absolutely right and the Church absolutely wrong."<sup>25</sup>

In modernism Bellarmine's appeal to Biblical scriptures to limit the scope of Copernican theory is seen as illegitimate in so far as it imposes a religious dogma on a scientific hypothesis. In other words, it imposes non-scientific values on purely scientific concerns and thus fails to understand the distinguishing marks of rational knowledge as opposed to faith. The conflict

between science and religion is itself a historical product of modernism. This conflict did not exist before Galileo's defenders used it to refute Bellarmine. We support Galileo because we are his heirs.

"We are the heirs of three hundred years of rhetoric about the importance of distinguishing sharply between science and religion ... But to proclaim our loyalty to these distinctions is not to say that there are 'objective' and 'rational' arguments for adopting them. Galileo, so to speak, won the argument and we all stand on the common ground of the grid of relevance and irrelevance which modern philosophy developed as a consequence of this victory."<sup>26</sup>

Galileo's reply was his *Letter to the Grand Duchess Christina*, in which he argued for the strict separation of theological and scientific issues, on the ground that science and religion require different enterprise so that the truth of science should not conflict with the truth of religion.

Kant has taken up these issues to their further details and has tried 'to limit knowledge in order to leave a room for faith'. Foucault criticises Kant on three basic premises (1) that Kant's position on 'representation' (sensibility, sensible intuitions) is inadequate; (2) the mathematical basis of philosophy (the Newtonian influences on Kant) is obsolete; (3) Kant's transcendental consciousness requires transformations. Let us dwell on these issues.

Foucault's structuralism gives rise to a new conception of the sign, which tries to displace the role Kant gave to representation (sensible intuition). Foucault's criticism of Kantian modernity is, in fact, a criticism of what Foucault calls the "decline or failure" of representation. This, however, does not mean that Foucault rejects the role of representation in the theory of sign once and for all. His point is that representation cannot be regarded a self-justifying starting point. This is because,

"representation has lost the power to provide a foundation...for the links that can join its various elements together. No composition, no decomposition, no analysis into identities and differences can now justify the connections of representations one to another. The power of representation must instead be sought outside representation, beyond its immediate visibility in a sort of behind-the-scenes world even deeper and denser than representation itself."<sup>27</sup>

Foucault appreciates Kant for his refusal to go along the lines of Descartes and Hume. Both rationalism and empiricism in modernism have made mistakes in man's quest for knowledge. Kant, as a matter of fact, allows that 'all our

knowledge begins with sensibility (representation) but it does not originate from sensibility (representation)'. Kant's critical philosophy questions representation on the basis of its rightful limits and thereby sanctions for the first time the withdrawal of knowledge and thought outside the space of representation. The entire empiricist tradition of modernism appears to Kant's critical philosophy as just dogmatism because it accepts representation without critically examining it. However, Foucault notes that Kant's work also,

"opens up ...the possibility of metaphysics, one whose purpose will be to question, apart from representation, and all that is the source and origin of representation."<sup>28</sup>

To question the origin of representation is to challenge that authority and this is the way that we go from unity to fragmentation. In modernism including that of Kant, knowledge formed a homogeneous whole (from philosophy to mathematics to empirical sciences). But post-Kantian development "exploded in different directions and could no longer be understood as a linear series of enquiries employing the same basic method in different domains."<sup>29</sup> Foucault thus furnishes three distinct dimensions to the space of knowledge-mathematical, philosophical and empirical sciences.

Foucault applies Kantian critique to Kantian representation and claims to have found a decline of representation, which in turn has given rise to Foucault's three divisions in the field of knowledge. The difference between Hume and Kant, on the claims of representation and knowledge, lies at the roots of Foucault's three dimensions.

"Some areas of knowledge (specifically, those dealing with empirical realities) can, he agrees, continue to operate without themselves dealing with the question of the grounds of representation (though, even these he sees as developing fundamental concepts that can not be reduced to representation). But there is a need for a new sort of reflective inquiry that probes the origins and basis of the Mind's powers of representing objects."<sup>30</sup>

Foucault receives the distinction between analytic and synthetic, drawn by Hume and revived by Russell and Ayer as against Kant's synthetic *a-priori* proposition, as the split between the mathematical and the empirical sciences.

"There is no longer any basis for assuming that the representative system of identities and differences yielded by, say, a logical or a mathematical analysis, will express the sorts of connections that in fact constitute the concrete reality of things. For these

connections will not in general be those of identities and differences but...those of structural and functional similarities. Accordingly, the analytic knowledge of the mathematical and logical sciences becomes sharply separated from the synthetic knowledge of empirical sciences."<sup>31</sup>

Although the three dimensions correspond to irreducibly different kinds of knowledge, Foucault notes that it is possible to apply the methods of one dimension to the basic issues of another dimension; like, application of mathematics to biology and economics, and so on.

On the question of representation, Foucault examines three different positions. In the most general sense, representation is essentially a relation between a subject and the objects it cognises. The three views Foucault elucidates are those of Kant, Schopenhauer and Ayer. In Kant, as we have seen, representation begins from the transcendental consciousness and seeks in it the conditions for the possibility of objects of representation. Kant's contention is that transcendental consciousness constitutes the objects of representation. But Foucault notes that,

"it is possible to approach the question from the side of the object. Here the idea is to find in the object the conditions of the possibility of the subject's representational experience, thereby developing a transcendental philosophy of the object. Such philosophies particularly focus on life, labor, and language, which...are introduced in the empirical sciences as non-representational sources of representational systems. Thus, life, labor and language define fields of what might term 'transcendental objectivity' opposite poles to Kant's field of transcendental subjectivity."<sup>32</sup>

As a result, we come across Schopenhauer's irrationalism. Foucault formulates another option, which tries to restrict us to our experiences, with no effort to provide it with any transcendental grounding either subjectively or objectively. This, Foucault says, is positivism which amounts to accepting what Kant would call the phenomenal world as the only domain of which we have any knowledge. It may here be pointed out that the knowledge of phenomenon is synthetic *a-priori* whereas positivism attempts to separate *a-priori* propositions from synthetic propositions. It is therefore not appropriate to identify Kant's phenomenon with the positivism. With this analysis of Foucault's formulation of Kantian representation, let us now come to Foucault's charges on Kant's transcendental consciousness.

As stated earlier in Part-I, transcendental consciousness is the subject of knowledge. By subject, Kant does not mean the biological being or the social being. Kant has drawn a distinction between man as a transcendental consciousness that constitutes the object of that knowledge. Foucault has a different definition of man, which is a constituent of Life, Labor and Language which display particular characteristics of man's finitude as the basis of the objective reality of these domains.

"The forces of life that form me as an organism are given to me as objects of my body; the forces of production that form as an economic being are given by my desire; the forces of language that form my speaking and writing are given by my expression."<sup>33</sup>

In the "Analytic of Finitude", Foucault carries out the project to show under what conditions human finitude can be appreciated. In Foucault's terminology, "finitude as *founding* is 'the fundamental', finitude as founded is the 'positive'. The project of modern philosophy has been to discover a relation between the fundamental and the positive that will support a coherent account of human finitude's self foundation. The difficulty of the project lies in the fact that the relation must somehow be both of identity (since man is one being) and differences (since nothing can literally precede and produce itself)...the effort of modern philosophy to develop an analytic of finitude have taken three forms, corresponding to three different ways of taking the fundamental positive pair. One relates man as a transcendental subject to man as empirical object; another relates to man as a thinking *cogito* to man as the un-thought, the *cogito* tries to grasp; the third relates man as return of his origin into the past"<sup>34</sup> Let us briefly examine Foucault's charges on 'transcendental-empirico doublet' of Kant.

On Kant's 'transcendental-empirico doublet', Foucault has developed two different approaches. One in which,

"knowledge has anatomo-physiological conditions, that it is formed gradually with in the structures of the body", and in the second, "knowledge and historical, social, or economic conditions,...in short that there was a *history* of human knowledge which could both be given to empirical knowledge and prescribe its forms."<sup>35</sup>

In the former, Kant's transcendental aesthetic is regarded as the subject of knowledge in terms of human biological body. It tries to show that human knowledge is essentially empirical in nature in terms of its basic characteristics and determinations. In the latter, human knowledge is regarded as historical rather than biological. This is a view that has developed out of Kant's



transcendental dialectic to Marx's dialectical materialism *via* Hegel's dialectic of the *Geist*. There is, however, another view, which Foucault has failed to mention and which has played an extremely important role in systematizing Kant. Fichte tries to systematize Kant's transcendental knowing self with the noumenal acting self. There is but one self, according to Fichte, whose primary concern is moral self-realization. Once the dualism between the world of 'knowing' and the world of 'doing' is overcome by positing one-self, Fichte proclaims, the nature of self, then, is to act and its essential goal is the realization of its own freedom. In fact, Fichte's whole labour is devoted to bridge the gulf between the first and the second *Critique*. Fichte interprets the self he has derived from Kant's first *Critique*. On the one hand, the self is transcendental, whose fundamental thrust is its own intuition of itself; on the other hand, it is primarily a moral self, free-in-itself, who subsumes even knowledge-particularly self knowledge-to its moral pursuits.

But Foucault has a different way of interpreting Kantian self. In order to outdo transcendental pretence in philosophy, Foucault highlighted the dualism between transcendental self and the embodied empirical self. Foucault shows this by an example. He draws a distinction between particular truths in the fields of biology, physics and human knowledge, and the general truths concerning the history of biology, physics and human cognition.

"To accept these as two irreducibly different kinds of truth would of course immediately reinstate a sharp distinction between the empirical and the transcendental. The reductionist approach must, therefore, find some way of giving a single account of both empirical and philosophical truth, being the latter on the former or *vice-versa*."<sup>6</sup>

The 'positivists', Foucault says, base philosophical truth on the empirical truth, and the basing empirical truth on philosophical truth he calls "eschatological". The positivists, as a matter of fact, regard the truth of our philosophical knowledge as dependent on the truth of the knowledge of physics and biology. The eschatological viewpoint says that our scientific and historical accounts of empirical objects are true in virtue of the truth (once it is achieved) of our philosophical discourse about knowledge. But Foucault regards both alternatives as self-defeating. Foucault says,

"On the positivist approach we set out to give a philosophical account of the possibility of empirical truths that are in question. On the eschatological approach we base empirical truth on philosophical truth and thereby abandon our initial project of

working solely on the level of empirical objects...efforts (e.g., Comte and Marx.) to carry out the reductionist project typically fluctuate between positivism and eschatology. But no matter how it is developed ...the project is one in which 'pre-critical naivete' holds undivided rule."<sup>37</sup>

About positivism, it may be pointed out that from Hume to the present-day logical atomists like Russell and earlier Wittgenstein and logical positivists like A.J. Ayer take it for granted that all our knowledge of the world is derived from sense data, which are unconnected and completely separate from one another. The basic principles of positivism have been the ultimate authority of the fact and observing the 'immediate given' has been the method of analysis and verification. Positivism induces thought to be satisfied with the facts, to renounce their transgression beyond them and to bow to the given state of affairs.

Similarly, about Marxism, it may be pointed out that for Marx, Engels and Lenin, matter is spatio-temporal and is constantly in motion. With the three dialectical laws-quantitative to qualitative changes and *vice-versa*, unity and struggle of opposites and negation of negation-consciousness about the world has evolved. It is matter, which is primary, and consciousness is secondary.

Foucault regards both the schools of positivism and Marxism as 'reductionist' if these two schools are compared with Kant. Positivism over emphasizes Kant's phenomenon and rejects Kant's claim for transcendental. Marxism over emphasizes materialism in Kant and underestimates Kant's transcendental consciousness. Because of this reductive project in Positivism and Marxism, Foucault says, we should not be surprised at their recent *rapprochement*.

If reductionism is to be overcome, both empirical and transcendental require resisting reduction of the empirical to the transcendental and *vice-versa*. It implies that Foucault is attempting to revive Cartesian dualism. *Cogito* must be one that sees human consciousness inextricably tied to an unthought (Cartesian extension or body) that cannot be entirely incorporated into the clearness of the *Cogito*'s thought. Foucault allows that philosophical reflection on man in terms of the *Cogito* and the unthought avoids the incoherence of attempts to reduce the transcendental to the empirical and *vice-versa*. In such a situation, man as the constituting subject of knowledge and its conflicts with man as the constituted object is sustained. The analytic of finitude that comes out of such a conflict is however not resolved and Foucault argues that

in the situation, the conflict of the dualism remains.

To overcome the dualism, Foucault proposes 'the retreat and return of the Origin.' The dualism in modernism which Foucault calls "Man's double nature" can be resolved by reflecting on man as a historical reality. Foucault suggests,

"...from this point of view, the 'positive' aspect of human finitude is found in the fact that man is, from the very first instance of its existence, burdened (even constituted) by a history that isn't of his own making, in one sense, of course, this is true of anything since there is nothing in the world that begins to exist without arising from something other than itself ...the ordinary things of the world originate as members of a series of homogeneous elements. The 'other' from which they arise is another of the same sort. Man however, as the unique reality capable of knowing the world of which he is nonetheless a part, originates from what is *essentially* other than him. It is as though his origin is the limit of a series of terms (man's history) to which it does not belong. If, then, man tries to discover his essential nature and identify by tracking back his history to its origin, he will be continuously frustrated. Any point of apparent origin that lies on the line of human history will be found not to be the true origin. On the other hand, the true origin (the point of application of the conditions that in fact produced man) will be a point at which man as such is not present; it will not, strictly speaking, be *his* origin. This is the sense in which man's origin constantly retreats from him. It is a limit that he can never reach by going back through the series of events that make up his history."

Foucault takes up history as a human convention and man himself is a part of that history. Outside man, in nature, we simply come across one event following another and it will not be a part of the temporal series of meaningful actions that constitute the temporal series of meaningful actions that constitute history. History begins only with the projects of human consciousness and the world is, after all, constituted as a historical reality only through human consciousness. And in his history, as stated above, man constantly retreats himself when he tries to search his originality. With this exposition, let us turn to Jacques Derrida.

Derrida, as a matter of fact, belongs to a non-Kantian and dialectical tradition-the latest attempt to shatter Kant's claims that 'understanding makes nature'. The work of Derrida, as a philosopher of language, can more suitably

be understood in terms of relations between words and the world. In his view,

"language is the last refuge of the Kantian tradition, of the notion that there is something eternally present to man's gaze (the structure of the universe, the moral law, the nature of language) which philosophy can let us see more clearly. The reason why the notion of 'philosophy of language' is an illusion is the same reason why philosophy-Kantian philosophy, philosophy as more than a kind of writing is an illusion. The twentieth-century attempt to purify Kant's general theory about the relation between representations and their objects by turning it into philosophy of language is...to be countered by making philosophy even more impure-more unprofessional, funnier, more allusive, sexier, and above all, more 'written.'"<sup>39</sup>

The basic issue is that Kant, like Plato, has developed a conceptual scheme, i.e. percepts without concepts are blind. The blindness of percepts means their meaninglessness. In order to give meaning to percepts, concepts are required. But concepts are universal and therefore a-temporally true and percepts are spatio-temporal. Derrida, in fact, take up Kantian project-to show how the a-temporally true can be "contained in a spatio-temporal vehicle, regularize the relation between man and what man seeks by exhibiting its 'structure', freezing the historical process of successive reinterpretations by exhibiting the structure of all possible interpretation. On 'writing', Richard Rorty says,

"Writing is an unfortunate necessity; what is really wanted is to show, to demonstrate, to point out, to exhibit, and make one's interlocutor stand at gaze before the world. The copy theory of ideas, the spectator theory of knowledge, the notion that 'understanding representation' is the heart of philosophy, are expressions of this need to substitute an epiphany for a text, to 'see through' representation."<sup>40</sup>

On writing, Derrida's position is that there is no end to it, writing always leads to more writing and more and still more: just as history does not give us complete knowledge or the final struggle but to more history. The question that arises is: how can Derrida spell out his answer that writing about writing will help to deconstruct the Kantian way of looking at things. I wish to focus on a few of Derrida's remarks about writing to see how he answers the question. 'What must philosophers think writing is that they resent so much the suggestion that this is what they do? Consider, to begin with, the following passage:

"there is therefore good and bad writing: the good and natural is the divine inscription in the heart and the soul; the perverse and artful is technique, exiled in the exteriority of the body. A modification well within the Platonic diagram: writing of the soul and of the body, writing of the interior and of the exterior, writing of conscience and of the passions, as there is a voice of the soul and a voice of the body ...The good writing has therefore always been comprehended. Comprehended as that which had to be comprehended: within a nature or a natural law, created or not, but first thought within an eternal presence. Comprehended, therefore, within a totality, and enveloped in a volume or a book. The idea of the book is the idea of a totality, finite or infinite, of the signifier. This totality of the signifier can not be a totality, unless a totality constituted by the signified pre-exists in it, supervises its inscriptions and its signs, and is independent of it in its ideality, is profoundly alien to the sense of writing ...If I distinguish the text from the book, I shall say that the destruction of the book as it is now underway in all domains, denudes the surface of the text."<sup>41</sup>

In such passages as this, Derrida goes ahead of modernism to create a new thing for writing to be about not the world but the texts, and we should stop trying to test texts for accuracy of representation:

"reading...cannot legitimately transgress the text toward something other than it, toward the referent (a reality that is metaphysical, historical, psycho-biographical, etc.) or toward a signifier outside the text whose content could take place. Could have taken place outside of language, that is to say, in the sense that we give here to that word, outside of writing in general ...There is nothing outside of the text."<sup>42</sup>

With the method of deconstruction, Derrida claims that only a transcendental idealist could be an empirical realist. Derrida is also not offering a comprehensive view of the world, like Kant who said that the order and regularity in the field of appearances that we entitled nature we ourselves introduced. Derrida is also not protesting against the errors of philosophical school, like Kant who critically examined the claims of rationalism and empiricism. Derrida is, however, protesting against the notion that the philosophy of language, pursued realistically, as the study of how language and the world are related is something more than it is first philosophy. The basic question is - what is Derrida's solution to the problem of the relation between language and the world? Derrida does not come right out and tell his

views about the relation of language and the world.

"To this one can only reiterate that Derrida is in the same situation in regard to language that many of us secularists are in regard to God. It isn't that we believe in God, or don't believe in God, or have suspended judgment about God. It isn't that we know that 'God' is a cognitively meaningless expression, or that it has its role in a language-game other than the fact stating, or whatever. We just regret the fact that the word is used so much. So it is for Derrida with the vocabulary of Kantian philosophy. His attitude towards centuries of worry about the relation between subject and object, representations and the real, is like the Enlightenment attitude toward centuries of worry about the relation between god and man, faith and reason."<sup>43</sup>

For Derrida, a sign always has a reference to another sign and so on. In other words, a text always refers to another text and it cannot refer to something, which is not a text. Derrida applies his method of deconstruction to outdo the metaphysical claim of logo-centrism based on the theory of sign. As a matter of fact, Kant's claim in the *Critique of Pure Reason* is purely epistemic. He has developed an episteme, which is synthetic *a-priori* in which representations are known through *a-priori* activity of human mind. The questions—can language be the expression of thought or can language represent the world?—could not get proper attention in Kant. Philosophy of language is the successor-subject to Kant's episteme.

To sum up Derrida's charges on Kant, we can say that Kant has modernist-epistemic preoccupations whereas Derrida is occupied with a *kind of writing*. Kant is not occupied with writing but with showing how knowledge is possible and to what extent. For Kant, philosophy like physics (Newtonian physics) has no literary pretensions; for Derrida, literature is a better way of doing philosophy than physics or mathematics. Writing, for Derrida, is to this kind of simple—getting it right and this is as much a philosophical activity as Kant's transcendental deduction of categories.

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- <sup>28</sup>*ibid.* p. 201
- <sup>29</sup>*ibid.* p. 202
- <sup>30</sup>*ibid.* p. 183
- <sup>31</sup>*ibid.* p. 184
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- <sup>33</sup>*ibid.* p.200
- <sup>34</sup>*ibid.* p.200
- <sup>35</sup>*ibid.* p.201
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