

De-Transcendentalization of Kant

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"Our reason has this peculiar fate that with reference to one class of its knowledge, it is always troubled with questions which cannot be rejected, because they spring from the very nature of reason, and which cannot be answered, because they transcend the powers of human reason."

Kant in his Preface to *Critique of Pure Reason*

Two hundred years have passed since the death of Kant.¹ But the legacy of Kant is seen in the post-metaphysical thinking. His impact on thinkers like Heidegger and Habermas is remarkable. These two thinkers who were very much influenced by Kantian writings have shown the limitations of Kant. They have approached Kant from a new perspective so as to explain how Kant gave a direction to his followers at the same time showing the need to de-transcendentalize Kant. This paper basically explains the importance of de-transcendentalization of Kant. Also Kant's understanding of reason is attempted to show how the problems which arise in Kant are transcended in Heidegger and Habermas. In the first part of the paper, the significance of the *Critique of Pure Reason* and the notion of Transcendental Idealism in Kant's philosophy, is explained which will serve as a background for the paper. In the second part, the relation between Kant and Heidegger is attempted to show how Heidegger reinterpreted Kant. In the third part of the paper, de-transcendentalization of Kant and the need for it is discussed from the post-metaphysical thinking, keeping Habermas as the central point. Also, the question whether dissolution of epistemology is necessary is attempted in the Kantian background.

I

In the post-metaphysical thinking the role of reason is unique. Some like Rorty consider it as a social phenomenon.

"We have to resist the urge to see social practices of justification as more than just such practices"² but explain "rationality and epistemic authority by reference to what society lets us to say"³

argues Rorty. Foucault attempts to disempower the ideas of reason by totally objectivating them. "What is this reason that we use? What are its historical effects? What are its limits, and what are its dangers?"⁴ asks Foucault. Derrida attempts for a totalized critique of reason. He believes that the ideas of reason are built into thought, and give rise to illusions and therefore he wants to renounce the ideas of reason by interrogating, disrupting and displacing them. Similarly, Habermas reconstructs the Kantian notion of reason so as to explain the importance of comprehensive reason. The origin of the issue can be traced back in the Kantian understanding of the notion of reason, especially in the *Critique of Pure Reason* (henceforth: *CPR*).

The basic questions in *CPR* are as follows: (1) how does knowledge arise and (2) what are the basic sources of knowledge? The *CPR* has some unclarities and contradictions according to some scholars. Kemp Smith explains this in terms of "patchwork theory" according to which when there is a long gap in the completion of a book, the gaps are inevitable and they should be properly related to the work to see it as a whole. Kant took more than ten years to complete the *CPR*. Thus we have to understand Kant's *CPR* by employing the patchwork theory. Kemp Smith develops the patchwork theory of the *Critique*, which can be seen in his Commentary. His Commentary to Kant's *CPR* appeared in 1918 before his translation of Kant's *CPR*. The patchwork theory according to Sebastian Gardner has three claims. They are: (1) concerning the text as an articulation of a philosophical position, (2) concerning its process of composition and (3) defining the proper method of its interpretation.⁵ There is also a philosophical claim that says that the *CPR* contains deep inconsistencies that no amount of exegetical ingenuity can remove.⁶ Since Kant took more than ten years to complete the *CPR*, he might have revised his views during these years. Kant himself writes how he finished the work. In one of his letters, he writes as follows:

(Though the *Critique* is) the outcome of reflection which has occupied me for a period of at least twelve years, I brought it to completion in the greatest haste within some four to five months, giving the closest attention to the content, but with little thought

of the exposition or of rendering it easy of comprehension by the reader—a decision which I have never regretted, since otherwise, had I any longer delayed, and sought to give it a more popular form, the work would probably never have been completed at all.⁷

Norman Kemp Smith is of the view that Kant is a rationalist of a unique nature. He says:

"Kant believes in, and emphasizes the importance of, the *a priori*. With it alone, he contends, is the *Critique* competent to deal. But it is an *a priori* which cannot be shown to be more than relative."⁸

Kant admits that at first he had no clear idea about what should be the goal of his first *Critique* and he had to think hard about it. He used *Critique* as an example to show his students the need for proper meditation. He said that anybody who writes or thinks methodically must know (1) what precisely it is that he wants to establish, and (2) what is decisive for establishing it.⁹

Kant's *Critique* tries to answer the following problems in philosophy. "What can I know? and what I ought to do and what may I hope for?". He answers the first question in the first *Critique*. He tries to answer the first question by showing what can be known with absolute certainty. His question is: "What can we know *a priori* and in complete isolation from experience?" He tries to answer the question namely whether the kind of knowledge sought by the metaphysicians is possible. The traditional metaphysics stands on a wrong presupposition that we can make substantive knowledge-claims about the world independent of experience. Kant's aim is to show that this is not possible and we cannot validly make such claims. Thus, he is trying to show that the traditional metaphysics stands on a fundamental mistake. In the first *Critique* he addresses four important questions. (1) How is Pure Mathematics possible? (2) How is a Pure Science of Nature possible? (3) How is Metaphysics in general possible? and (4) How is Metaphysics possible as a Science? The answer to the first question, according to him, lies in the Transcendental Aesthetic. Pure mathematics and its synthetic *a priori* conditions are possible because space and time are *a priori* forms of intuition. Similarly, the answer to the second question is available in the Transcendental Logic wherein he says that science and its *a priori* cognition are possible because we have the categories and the principles. "Transcendental Dialectic" gives answer to the third question. Kant answers the fourth question by saying that metaphysics which exists as

a human need and a natural disposition of reason is possible as a science of our necessary conceptual framework.

Kant, during the period from 1746 to 1759, wanted to provide a foundation for metaphysics. But this was not maintained during 1760 to 1766. He rejected the possibility of metaphysics. From 1766 to 1772 once again he returned to metaphysics. It is during this period, he wanted to offer a firm foundation for metaphysics. What is interesting in Kantian understanding of metaphysics is that for him, the task of metaphysics is the science of the limits of human reason. He was in support of ontology. Later from 1772 to 1780, he understood that metaphysics failed to resolve one basic problem, "How are synthetic a priori principles valid of experience if they are not derived from it?" In the pre-critical period, Kant was attached to traditional rationalism. His pre-critical thought and his writings that are prior to 1781 show that he was influenced by traditional rationalism and dogmatic empiricism. When Kant was fifty-seven years old, the *CPR* was published in 1781 and again in revised form in 1788, wherein he offered a new foundation for human knowledge. In the *CPR* second edition, he says as follows: "all our knowledge begins with experience...no knowledge of ours is antecedent to experience but all knowledge begins with it." Kant was searching for a new principle of rationality capable of overcoming the problems raised by the Enlightenment conception of reason. Kant's critical philosophy is an attempt in this direction. Kant in his essay, "What is Enlightenment?" analyses the notion of reason to show that the rational subject is an autonomous and self-dependent agent, judging everything in independence from authority and tradition by means of reason. The role of reason is studied by Adorno, Horkheimer, Habermas and others. Adorno and Horkheimer considered western rationality as the totalization of reification, domination and repression. Against this background, Habermas defended the positive aspects of enlightenment and also of modernity and western rationality. He emphasized the role of rationality in the economy, culture and morality. Marcuse defines reason as

"the fundamental concept of philosophical thought, the only one by means of which it has bound itself to human destiny... it is not only a category of bourgeois philosophy, but a concern of mankind".¹⁰

Horkheimer and Adorno in their *Dialectic of Enlightenment* attempted a critique of instrumental reason. Instrumental reason is not

identified with a particular period of history, society or class. Rationalization has thus moved from a historically specific to global context, thus expanded its scope to the whole of human society. Both Horkheimer and Adorno argue that unfortunately, the Enlightenment project, which had the agenda of liberating humanity, has turned into a new and powerful force of domination. In *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, both Horkheimer and Adorno explain how reason turned into its opposite and resulted in new rationalized forms of social domination. Social rationality turned into irrationality and enlightenment into deception. Not only this, Enlightenment reason has resulted in domination and regression. Thus for them, instrumental reason and science have become myths which resulted in worship and praise for superior powers and social domination. In Kantian transcendental philosophy, the concept of an interest of reason is stressed. He makes a distinction between an empirical and pure interest with regard to practical reason. Especially in the *Foundations of the Metaphysics of Morals*, Kant deals with the concept of a pure practical interest of reason. His concept of a pure interest is unique since it defines a fact on which we can support our certainty of the reality of pure practical reason.

In the "Transcendental Analytic" or theory of understanding, Kant says that in addition to a-priori forms of intuition, there are also a-priori concepts of the pure understanding or categories. Similarly, in the "Transcendental Dialectic" he says that the doctrines of traditional metaphysics are wrongly derived because of our attempt to use concepts of the understanding without corresponding evidence from sensibility.

"Without sensibility no object would be given to us, without understanding none would be thought by us. Thoughts without concepts are empty, intuitions without concepts are blind."¹¹

Thus, Kant is making it clear that the knowledge is possible from the sensuous intuition and conceptual understanding. Kant as a transcendental idealist shows that the method adopted by him in *CPR* is a "transcendental one". He says:

"Transcendental philosophy is the idea of a science for which the critique of pure reason should draft. According to fixed principles, an architectonic plan, guaranteeing the completeness and certainty of all parts of which the building consists. It is a system of all principles of pure reason."¹²

Kant's important contribution in the *Critique* is the distinction

between the "immanent" and "transcendent". By transcendent, he means the philosophy which is beyond the limitations of experience. He gives the definition of the transcendent as follows:

"I call all knowledge transcendental which is not concerned with objects but with our knowledge of objects in general in so far as it is to be a priori possible."¹³

The transcendental philosophy has to answer the question namely, "How are synthetic a-priori judgments possible?" Kant supported the transcendental philosophy and wanted to establish it for the main reason that it is through it one can justify the synthetic a-priori principles of science. It should be noted here that Kant's usage of the "transcendental" corresponds with that of the "critical". The term "critique" is used by him to show the types of human knowledge and also to evaluate or criticize the extension of the principles of sensuous intuition and of understanding beyond the realm of experience. Kant himself says that his method in the *Critique* is a transcendental one. In his Commentary to Kant's *CPR*, Kemp Smith says that the *CPR* in its primary meaning signifies the passing of critical judgments upon pure reason. Kant himself remarks that his time is the age of criticism. The word "pure" here means that it is absolutely a-priori. The "critique" is the critical examination of pure reason itself. Knowledge through reason with practical intent retains its own status according to Kant. Kemp Smith says that the word "critique" is used by Kant in the widest sense, to mean that it is the source of all a-priori elements.

Supporting his Transcendental Idealism, Kant says that it is that which supports the view that all human knowledge is restricted to things given in space and time, as appearances and not as they are apart from their being related to our mind, as they are in themselves. Kant says:

"The transcendental idealism did not concern the existence of things, for it has never entered my mind to doubt this, but only the sensible representation of things, to which space and time first and foremost belong; and of these as in general of all appearances, I have only shown that they are not things".¹⁴

Explaining further his definition of Transcendental Idealism, in *CPR*, Kant says as follows:

"It has been sufficiently proved in the Transcendental Aesthetic that everything which is perceived in space and time, therefore all

objects of an experience possible to us, are nothing but appearances that is mere representations which, such as they are represented namely as extended beings, or series of changes, have no independent existence outside our thoughts. This system I call 'Transcendental Idealism'".¹⁵

No doubt, the Transcendental Idealism has an impact on philosophers and they could not simply accept or dismiss this. Commenting on this aspect of Kant, Kartin Flikschuh says: "Kant's transcendental idealism has long had the effect on many philosophers that a red rag is said to have on a bull."¹⁶

II

Like Kant, Heidegger also develops the transcendental philosophy through the concept of being. One can see the resemblances between Heidegger's notion of being and Kantian notion concerning the conditions of the possibility of experience. Heidegger in his *Being and Time*, (henceforth: *BT*) says that space and time of Kant as forms of intuition are instances of the phenomenon of being. The ontology of *Dasein* is transcendental according to Heidegger. His question namely, how is it possible for humans to understand entities as entities is due to the influence of Kant. Like Kant, Heidegger also talks about the a-priori character of the temporal horizons of human existence. Kant's discussion of the a-priori categories of the human understanding is depicted in Heidegger's notion of human existence in a new way. The relationship between them is explained as follows:

"Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics is, then, a collision of the vision of *Sein und Zeit* with the vision of the *Critique of Pure Reason*, the latter a vision without which *Sein und Zeit* would not have been possible, but one which *Sein und Zeit* had to transcend, giving the *Critique* in that very act its ultimate sense".¹⁷

In Kant, transcendental time is the horizon of understanding of being in general. In the second part of *BT*, Heidegger interprets Kant's first *Critique* from the point of human finiteness. *BT* is staged as a retrieval of Kant's transcendental problem. The uniqueness of Kant is that it is he who first conceived the question of being. But Heidegger is of the

view that Kant failed to offer a proper ontology of Dasein. In his interpretation of Kant, Heidegger tried to show that the root of our faculties is the transcendental imagination. Kant's immanent metaphysics is the synthetic a priori ontology of the phenomenal world. This means that being immanent is being within the realm of nature whereas the transcendent metaphysics is that which lies principally beyond the bounds of experience. The transcendental has in common that it does not go beyond experience; it has in common with the transcendent that it is not itself being experienced. In his interpretation of Kant, Heidegger says the *CPR* has nothing do with epistemology. Heidegger's view is that the *CPR* is basically concerned with the problem of transcendence than with the problem of epistemology.

"The whole of Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason* is a circling around the problem of transcendence— which in its most primordial sense is not an epistemological problem, but the problem of freedom— without Kant's having secured this transcendence phenomenon radically from the ground up. He must be read, however, for what he wanted to say."¹⁸

Thus, Heidegger makes it clear that Kant always maintained the view that the notion of transcendence is important for him rather than the problem of epistemology. Kant's distinction between appearance and thing-in-itself also explains this. He believed that appearance and thing-in-itself are two different transcendental aspects. In the ontological sense, the term "appearance" means that which is given to us under a-priori forms of the senses in space and time. In the epistemological sense, the term means the subjective representation of such an object. The distinction between appearance and thing-in-itself does not imply a distinction between two kinds of things but between two aspects of one and the same thing.

How does Heidegger differ from the subject-centered philosophy which can be seen in the Kantian tradition? Commenting on this, Heidegger says that Kant has not seriously challenged the basis of traditional philosophy. Heidegger, on the other hand, has to be appreciated for supporting the hermeneutic approach to philosophy which is definitely a progress from the traditional approach of thinkers like Descartes, Kant and others. The main drawback of the traditional method was that it considered subject as the knower and as something different from the objective world. Heidegger could successfully show by using

his own hermeneutics the problem that one faces if he or she accounts for such traditional method. For example, in *BT*¹⁹ Heidegger explains this. He further shows how his method of doing philosophy is different from that of Kant. The role of understanding and interpretation in knowledge is first stressed by Heidegger. In this section a problem faced by Kant is discussed. In *CPR*, Kant tries to explain the possibility of our scientific knowledge of nature. The issue, namely, how knowledge is possible is important both for Kant and Heidegger. Kant tried to explain what knowledge is and also wanted to explain the relation between the knower and the known. But Heidegger's notion of knowledge and understanding is different. Let us see how Heidegger explains this.

Between 1927 and 1930, Heidegger wrote five books. The first of these works, *Being and Time* is to inquire into the meaning of being. Twenty years later he claimed that the book was incomplete due to the failure of language.²⁰ When *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics* was published two years after *Being and Time*, there was a speculation that the task begun in 1927 would be fulfilled. But "Of the Essence of Truth" and "What is Metaphysics?" explain that a radical shift in method has occurred in the three years since the publication of the *Being and Time*. Heidegger had dropped the fundamental ontology from his agenda and replaced it with history of Being that emphasizes the participation of human beings in the "happening" of Being. Several significant reforms took place in *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics*, which finally led into an important work, *An Introduction to Metaphysics*.²¹ Heidegger's *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics* and *BT* have some relation. The method which Heidegger adopted in these two books is that they are transcendental in nature. How Kant applied his transcendental method is seen in the writings of Heidegger. Both of them were interested in the possibility of scientific metaphysics. Both were trying to understand metaphysics in the light of science. Kant believed that metaphysics is rooted in the nature of human reason. Heidegger says that Kant's purpose of writing *CPR* is to show metaphysics is a science. He says:

"...it must be possible for reason to bring metaphysics to certainty, either in knowledge or ignorance of its objects, that is either to the decision about the objects of its questions, or about the capacity or incapacity of reason to judge something in consideration of them, thereby to enlarge our pure reason with certainty, or set it definite and reliable limits. This latter question, which flows out

of the above general problem, would rightly be expressed as: *How is metaphysics possible as a science?*"²²

Heidegger also maintains that metaphysics is important because it leads to the question of Being. In his *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics* he says:

"In what does the essence of knowledge of Being by beings lie? To what extent does this necessarily open up into knowledge of beings as a whole? Why does this point anew to a knowledge of the knowledge of Being? Thus, 'Metaphysics' simply remains the title for the philosophical difficulty."²³

Though Heidegger says that Kant was the first and the only person who had gone any stretch of the way towards investing the dimension of temporality, at the same time Heidegger charges him for not treating the subjectivity of the subject enough. Heidegger is of the view that Kant could never achieve an insight into the problematic of temporality. The reasons are as follows:

"... in the first place, Kant altogether neglected the problem of Being; and, in common with this he failed to provide an ontology with Dasein as its theme or (to put this in Kantian language) to give a preliminary ontological analytic of the subjectivity of the subject."²⁴

One important distinction between Kant on the one hand and Heidegger and Habermas on the other is that if we consider Kant from transcendental standpoint, Heidegger and Habermas are to be seen from hermeneutic standpoint. Though Heidegger can also be considered as "transcendental" in nature, his approach to philosophical problems goes beyond this and reaches the hermeneutical standpoint.

Heidegger's work, *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics* was severely criticized by Cassirer, Marjorie Grene and Karl Löwith and many others. How far he has really interpreted Kant? "For despite his genuine insight into the structure of Kant's greatest work, it must be admitted that the 'time' and the 'creative imagination' Heidegger finds in the *Critique of Pure Reason* are in large part grafts from his own thought," says Grene.²⁵ It is also said that Heidegger's reading of Kant is the self-interpretation in the text of another. But how far these criticisms are valid? Heidegger is not expected to repeat what Kant had already said. Then it becomes a duplication of Kant. This is not what

Heidegger is interested in. He has interpreted Kant in his own way so as to suit him for the present day. His interpretation is hermeneutical in nature. As an hermeneutic thinker, Heidegger has interpreted Kant in his present historical situations. In *BT* he says:

"What is philosophically primary is neither a theory of the concept-formation or historiology nor the theory of historiological knowledge, nor yet the theory of history as the Object of historiology; what is primary is rather the interpretation of authentically historical entities as regards their historicity. Similarly, the positive outcome of Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason* lies in what it has contributed towards the working out of what belongs to any Nature whatsoever, not in a 'theory' of knowledge."²⁶

Hence, Heideggerian understanding of *CPR* has a meaning and a purpose. Also there is nothing wrong in showing the limitations of a thinker. Every thinker is a product of his time. Kant is no exception to this. We have to read Heidegger's two studies namely, *Phenomenological Interpretation of Kant's Critique of Pure Reason* and *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics* in this background. For example, Heidegger shows how he could go beyond Kant in *BT* with regard to the "phenomena". He says:

"...phenomena are never appearances though on the other hand every appearance is dependent on phenomena. If one defines 'phenomenon' with the aid of a conception of 'appearance' which is still unclear, then everything is stood on its head".²⁷

In his study of Kant, Heidegger says that the *CPR* is a discussion on the foundations of logic.

"What meaning does the copula have in all assertions about being, which is not a being? What meaning does the copula have in all ontological propositions? This question is the central mystery, which Kant investigates in his *Critique of Pure Reason*, even if it is not readily visible from the outside."²⁸

For Kant, says Heidegger, knowledge is primarily an intuition. He claims that in Kant, one can see the priority of intuition. This notion of intuition in Kant has fascinated Heidegger. He tries to understand the Kantian intuition in the background of "time". He says:

"Kant is the first and the only one who traversed a stretch of the

path toward investigating the dimension of temporality—or allowed himself to be driven there by the compelling force of the phenomena themselves”.²⁹

There is some inner connection between Kant and Heidegger. The works *CPR* and *BT* have some common themes. Heidegger reports:

“In preparing the lecture course on ‘Kant’s *Critique of Pure reason*’ that was held in the Winter Semester of 1927/28, my attention was drawn to the chapter on Schematism, and I glimpsed therein a connection between the problem of the Categories, that is the problem of Being in traditional Metaphysics and the phenomenon of time. In this way the manner of questioning from *Being and Time* came into play as an anticipation of my attempted interpretation of Kant.”³⁰

Kant developed his ontology in terms of logic. Sometimes, Kant equates transcendental with ontological. Heidegger’s views on this is expressed as follows:

“Transcendental knowledge is a knowledge, which investigates the possibility of an understanding of being, a pre-ontological understanding of being; and such an investigation is the task of ontology. Transcendental knowledge is ontological knowledge, i.e., an a-priori knowledge of the ontological conception of being. Because transcendental knowledge is ontological knowledge, Kant can equate transcendental philosophy with ontology.”³¹

Heidegger in *BT* makes an attempt to answer the question of being. First of all one should know how to ask the question of being properly and thus *BT* is only the way to the clarification of the fundamental ontology, a way that we must seek and follow. In many of his later works he had argued that we could not provide an answer to the question of being at all. Heidegger’s notion of metaphysics also differs from Aristotle’s notion of metaphysics. For Heidegger, metaphysics is fundamental to a cultural era as a whole but for Aristotle, it is only fundamental to the sciences because it provides them with their first principles and causes. For Heidegger each historical epoch has different metaphysical foundations, but for Aristotle, Descartes and Kant, metaphysical principles should be valid for all periods because they are necessarily true and a-priori. Thus, one can see the need for Heidegger to reject the Kantian metaphysics.

What is interesting in Kant and Heidegger is that both of them are

in favour of transcendental turn. But there are differences. Kant's transcendental turn was inseparably related to his transcendental idealism. Though Heidegger rejects the transcendental idealism he also supports a transcendental turn. For Heidegger, the transcendental subject, *i.e.* Dasein and world are equiprimordial, because Dasein is being in the world. Being in the world cannot be understood in terms of traditional philosophy. According to Heidegger, the traditional ontology failed to get into the root of the problem of Being. This was his basic problem. For him, the Greeks have asked the following questions: "What are beings as beings? What are beings as a whole"? Traditional ontology, Heidegger believes, is an inquiry into beings as beings and not into being as such. Traditional ontology deals with the ideas of being from a narrow perspective. It also is restricted to be able to explain all the ways and senses in which we can understand being. Moreover, it fails to explain the distinctive and unique human way of being. Man exists such that his being is manifested to him as his own. Each of us says: "I am." The aim of *BT* is to discuss the whole meaning and structure of the being we express by the *am* is totally different from the real existence of a thing. Thus, in both Kant and Heidegger, we see a transcendental turn with difference that is inevitable for both.

III

A transformation of Kantian transcendental subject or consciousness is attempted by Habermas in terms of language and intersubjectivity. But it should not be forgotten that Habermas has kept himself away from the transcendental philosophy. Especially in the post-metaphysical philosophy attempts for de-transcendentalization of Kantian philosophy is common. For example, Apel makes an attempt to transform transcendental philosophy by his approach known as "transcendental pragmatics", wherein he tries to combine transcendental reflection in the Kantian sense at the same time, is pragmatic in its approach. Apel says that it is "transcendental hermeneutics" to mean the Heideggerian idea of reflection as grounding reason through a hermeneutics of understanding. Habermas was influenced by Apel's transcendental hermeneutic method. Habermas' book, *Knowledge and Human Interests* (henceforth: *KHI*) deals with how Pierce could not succumb to the

objectivist attitude of early positivism because of his knowledge of Berkeley, Kant and medieval scholasticism. How is this possible? Habermas says: "The methodically secured progress of natural-scientific knowledge had given Kant occasion to investigate the transcendental conditions of knowledge as such..."³² Further, he says that knowledge is constituted by the subject. He says

"In truth, knowledge of the apparently objective world of facts has its transcendental basis in the prescientific world. The possible objects of scientific analysis are constituted a priori in the self-evidence of our primary life-world".³³

Habermas' *Between Facts and Norms* tries to justify a post-metaphysical reason to transcendentalize it since it retains the idealizing force of context-transcending forms.³⁴ Habermas is of the view that Kantian principle of a-priori leads to a weaker version of transcendentalism. Habermas deals with the question how individuals become competent rational subjects through a process of reconstructing everyday experiences. For this he talks of a weaker interpretation of transcendental. Writing on this, he says:

"Transcendental investigation must rely on the competence of knowing subjects who judge which experiences may be called coherent experiences in order then to analyze this material with a view to finding general and necessary presuppositions...As long as the assertion of its necessity and universality has not been refuted, we term 'transcendental' the conceptual structure recurring in all coherent experiences. In this weaker version, the claim that this structure can be demonstrated a priori is dropped."³⁵

Habermas' essay, "What is Universal Pragmatics?" which was published in 1976 deals with the notion of weak transcendentalism, similar to that of Apel's. But Apel is keen on using the term "transcendental hermeneutics" or "transcendental pragmatics" which is not acceptable to Habermas. The reason for this is obvious. Habermas feels that the term "transcendental hermeneutics" or "transcendental pragmatics" is misleading. Habermas is of the view that the term might conceal the break with a priorism and the rejection of Kant's distinction between empirical and transcendental analysis.

Habermas is not fully free from the Kantian influence. In the social and political writings of Habermas, one can see the key role played by Kant. Not only Habermas, but also the whole post-metaphysical thought

has been influenced by Kant. This makes Piaget to say:

"I consider myself to be profoundly Kantian, but of a Kantianism that is not static, that is, the categories are not there at the outset; it is rather a Kantianism that is dynamic."³⁶

Habermas also speaks in a similar vein. In his *Postmetaphysical Thinking*, he deals with the question whether it is possible to approach consciousness as a foundation. He attacks the "dynamic Kantianism" as follows:

"Kant had to be brought into accord with Darwin. Later, the theories of Freud, Piaget and Saussure offered third categories that avoided the basic conceptual dualism of the philosophy of consciousness."³⁷

But some scholars are of the view that Habermasian intersubjectivity can be reconciled with Kantian understanding. Dallmayr in his "Is Critical Theory Humanism?" argues that Habermas uses the transcendental subject for a quasi-transcendental intersubjectivity. He says that Habermas' approach to critical theory is more or less man-or subject focussed orientation. He says as follows:

"The distinctions between empiricism and hermeneutics, system and lifeworld, and prepositional reflexive can, without undue violence, be reconciled with the Cartesian and Kantian subject-object bifurcation."³⁸

But this view is not shared by Habermas. He says:

"I have always attempted to steer between the Scylla of a leveling, transcendence-less empiricism and the Charybdis of a high-flying idealism that glorifies transcendence. I hope to have learned much from Kant, and still I have not become a Dallmayrian Kantian because the theory of communicative action *integrates* the transcendental tension between the intelligible and the world of appearances in communicative everyday praxis, yet does not thereby *level* it out."³⁹

Thus, by using communicative action as a basic principle, Habermas tries to solve the problems faced by Kant.

In his preface to *KHI*, Habermas says that a radical critique of knowledge *i.e.*, metacritique of epistemology is only possible as social theory.⁴⁰ No doubt, epistemology underwent a revision in the writings of Kant. In *KHI*, Habermas says:

"Even in Kant, through whose transcendental-logical perspective epistemology first became conscious of itself and thereby entered its own singular dimension, attributes to philosophy a sovereign role in relation to science."⁴¹

But it cannot be denied that a study of epistemology is essential because it gives a foundation for philosophy itself. Garbis Kortian's statement on this is noteworthy:

"For how could any other inquiry—metaphysics, ontology or anthropology—be pursued independently of epistemology? In all these fields we seek valid knowledge claims; and we cannot even know what these may be until we have determined what it is to have properly founded knowledge. The findings of all other inquiries have thus to pass muster according to the canons laid down in epistemology; and it is epistemology which can, therefore, help us to understand something of the form which any successful inquiry must take."⁴²

Does this mean that epistemology is something final and a-priori by nature? Adorno's work, *Metacritique of Epistemology* proves that even the critique of epistemology is not an exception to this. The traditional conception of knowledge has been questioned by modern thinkers. The role of knowledge can also be critiqued by nature. But the role played by reason in understanding cannot be underestimated. In the post-modern thinking, Habermas emphasizes how knowledge and human interests are interrelated. His aim is to develop language or communication as a source of knowledge. He feels that by communicative understanding, social understanding is possible. Practical knowledge depends on language. Knowledge arrived through communication is made possible by the linguistic symbols. In other words, knowledge comes through social interaction or intersubjectivity. It is through a dialogue we understand each other and it should be considered as a definite source of knowledge. "Reality is constituted within a form of social life where social groups communicate through the medium of ordinary language", says Kortian.⁴³

For Habermas, it is vital to make the distinction between work and interaction and the later, according to him, is the basis of the communicative and symbolic activities through which social life is constituted. This made him formulate the distinction among the three types of knowledge-constitutive interests, which govern all human activities. Let us try to locate the Kantian conception of knowledge in

the background of the distinction between knowledge and interests. The pluralism of interests are: (1) empirical-analytical interest in potential control, (i.e., instrumental interest) (2) hermeneutic-historical interest in understanding (i.e., practical interest) and (3) critical-emancipatory interest in freedom and autonomy. The above differentiation is necessary for Habermas in order to disprove the claim made by the positivists that knowledge is identified by a single interest. By rejecting such a claim, Habermas explains how to distinguish these three basic forms of our scientific interests in knowing about the world and how they underlie all cognitive activities whether we are conscious of it or not.

In empirical-analytical interest, the validity depends on the technical explicability. It is rooted in a desire for political control over external nature. In his study of Peirce's pragmatism, Habermas explains how it vitiates the narrow scientific and naïve objectivism, which could be seen in the writings of early positivism. The ground of inter-subjectivity is not the ground of purposive-rational action which pragmatism of Pierce is constructed. It is the symbolic interaction between subjects who reciprocally know and recognize each other as individuals. This communicative action, in Habermas' view, is a system of reference that cannot be reduced to the framework of instrumental action. In the behavioral system of instrumental action, the language is monologic due to the three modes of inference, namely, deduction, induction and abduction. But communicative action is a dialogue and has a system of reference, which cannot be conceived in the behavioural system of instrumental action. In dialogue, the mode of knowledge is linked to the framework of symbolic interaction. Habermas observes:

"...every dialogue develops on entirely different basis, namely that of the reciprocal recondition of subjects who identify one another under the category of self-hood (*Ichheit*) and at the same time maintain themselves in their non-identity."⁴⁴

All purely interpretative or humanistic approaches are guided by hermeneutic-historical interests. This practical interest supports a model of communicative action where there is inter-subjective action. It is not hermeneutical but also historical because the meanings that come to constitute societies are the outcomes of the development of historical tradition. Habermas is of the view that these kinds of interests do not constitute and do not exhaust approaches to the study of social phenomena.

"Whereas empirical-analytic methods aim at disclosing and comprehending reality under the mutual understanding in ordinary language communication and in action according to common norms,"

says Habermas.⁴⁵

The knowledge constitutive interest of the cultural sciences is practical because of the presupposition of practice involved in them. But Habermas makes it clear that the hermeneutic-historical sciences cannot do a complete justice to the study of social phenomenon because of their claim to self-sufficiency and universality. In the empirical-analytic sciences, there is a denial of the critical approach and in the hermeneutic-historical sciences there is a pre-understanding of traditional heritage. Hence, there is a need for the third kind of interest, namely, critical-emancipatory interest which points towards an ideal space for free communication unmasking the hidden systematic distortions.

Habermas admits that the third kind of interest is simply special case of the hermeneutic-historical one. The main difference is that emancipatory interest involves a different attitude toward meanings. It is not a mere descriptions and understanding but to criticize and transform them. This means that values and norms have social functions linked to social and cultural reproduction. A special feature of this kind of interest is that a cognitive activity unites both empirical analysis of "what is" to the normative analysis of "what ought to be". In the empirical analysis, it is a mere study of how power relations constrain the realization of human potentials and lead to distorted communication. Whereas a normative analysis aims at an ideal speech situation where falsifying consciousness would be reduced because communication here assumes the form of authentic dialogue not based on asymmetrical relations of power. Habermas declares that in the power self-reflection, knowledge, and interest are one. The importance of interest in emancipation is explained as follows:

... only in an emancipated society, whose members' autonomy and responsibility had been realized, would communication have developed into the non-authoritarian and universally practical dialogue from which both our model of reciprocally constituted ego identity and our idea of true consensus are always implicitly derived.⁴⁶

The unity of knowledge and interest proves itself in a dialectic,

Morals, London, 1948, p.115

⁵⁸*ibid.*, p.126

⁵⁹Habermas: *Theory of Communicative Action*, vol. I. (tr.) Thomas McCarthy, Cambridge, Polity Press, 1984, p. 397

⁶⁰*ibid.*, p. 372

⁶¹*ibid.*, p.101

⁶²Foucault: What Is Enlightenment? in *The Foucault Reader*, (ed.), Paul Rabinow, Penguin, 1991, p. 46

⁶³Foucault, "What is Enlightenment?" op. cit, p. 45

⁶⁴*ibid.* p. 42

⁶⁵Habermas: *Theory of Communicative Action*, vol. I, p. 145

and perfect end." 49

Kant in his preface to the second edition of *CPR*, says that reason only understands what it itself produces according to its own plan.

Meta-critique is an attempt to study the crisis of epistemology, which started from Kant to elucidate the relation between knowledge and interest. As Kortian puts it,

"Kant's critical concept of rationality has either been usurped by Hegel's absolute knowledge or liquidated by positivist claim. As a result, an objective configuration as important as the phenomenon of science has not been addressed philosophically in its full extent and significance since Kant"⁵⁰

Habermas attempts a metacritical radicalization of Kant's transcendentalism. Habermas as a critic of Kant deals with three important presuppositions which Hegel places. They are: (1) the concept of knowledge, (2) the knowing subject, and (3) the Kantian distinction between theoretical and practical reason. Let us see how Habermas deals with them.

Kantian epistemology presupposes the concept of knowledge and the knowing subject. When Kant talks about the scientific knowledge, he assigns a special status to it. It is the prototype knowledge of all knowledge. It is the normative force of all knowledge. Habermas says:

"Characteristically, in the preface to the *Critique of Pure Reason*, Kant resorts to the examples of mathematics and contemporary physics. Both disciplines are distinguished by what appears to be relatively constant cognitive progress."⁵¹

The second presupposition deals with the assumption of a complete, fixed knowing subject, or a normative concept of the ego. Commenting on Kant's understanding of this, Habermas says:

"For nothing seemed more certain to him (Kant) than the self-consciousness in which I am given to myself as the 'I think' that accompanies all of my representations."⁵²

Habermas explains how Hegel observes that the Kantian critique of knowledge assumes a consciousness, which is not transparent to itself. Consciousness for Kant does not experience a self-reflection which would enable it to say how it passed from the state of natural consciousness to that of pure self-consciousness on the basis of which

the critique of knowledge is developed.⁵³ The third presupposition is the distinction between theoretical and practical reason. Habermas says that the critique of pure reason assumes a different concept of the ego than that of practical reason.

Kant and Hegel attempted for a critique of knowledge. But there is a difference. Kant's critique was oriented towards the physical and mathematical sciences of his time, whereas Hegel attempted to do through phenomenological experience. Habermas rightly argues:

"Kant's critique of knowledge accepts an empirical concept of science in the form of contemporary physics and derives from it the criteria of possible science in general. Hegel shows that the critique of knowledge, if it unconditionally follows its own intention, must abandon such presuppositions."⁵⁴

Thus, Habermas shows in Hegel we see how the standard of critique must emerge from the experience of reflection. Habermas claims that the metacritique of knowledge would lead to the dissolution of epistemology. He shows how epistemology can move towards social theory. He develops a thesis according to which all theory and all epistemology refer to this social context and therefore appeal to a social theory. He further shows how reason should be based on proper grounds. Commenting on reason, Habermas says:

"There is neither a higher nor a lower reason to which we can appeal, only a procedurally sobering reason— a reason that proceeds solely on sufficient grounds; a reason that puts itself on trial. That is what Kant meant: the critique of reason is reason's proper task."⁵⁵

Habermas gives his dues to Kant by saying that Kant is the only philosopher in the German tradition who is really devoid of ambiguities.⁵⁶ Similar to Kant's idea of reason, Habermas also develops his theory of communicative action, which attempts to identify and reconstruct social-practical notion of reason. The social-practical ideas of reason are both immanent and transcendent to Habermas. It tries to relocate the Kantian distinction between the real and the ideal within the dominion of social practice.

Kant in his *Groundwork of the Metaphysic of Morals* says that everybody "who cannot act except under the Idea of freedom is by this alone—from a practical point of view—really free."⁵⁷ Further he says

that this is correct precisely of rational beings. For example as rational agents we have to regard ourselves as capable of acting and judging on the basis of reason whether one is really free or not. There are pragmatic presuppositions of rational agency here. Kant says:

"The concept of the intelligible is only a point of view which reason finds itself constrained to adopt outside of appearances in order to offer to conceive of itself as practical."⁵⁸

The agent's capacity to engage in practical reasoning is the accountability. In other words, accountability is a requirement for rational agency. Similarly there is agent's capacity to engage in critical-reflective discourse, which is otherwise known as autonomy. Autonomous agents play a role at the critical-reflexive level of discourse. In Habermas also there is internal connection between rational justification and rational agency. In the *Theory of Communicative Action*, he says:

"... in certain spheres of life through communication aimed at reaching agreement, then the reproduction of the species also requires satisfying the conditions of a rationality inherent in communicative action."⁵⁹

Similar to Kant, Habermas is also of the view that the notion of rational accountability is centered on the agent's ability to participate in the process of understanding. But differences are inevitable. Habermas transforms the focus of the critique of reason from forms of transcendental subjectivity to forms of communicative interaction. But Kant deals with the objective validity only in terms of structures of consciousness. Habermas is of the view that the unsettled ground of rationally motivated agreement among participants in argumentation is our only foundation— in questions of physics no less than in those of morality. Habermas's understanding of communication exhibits the rational dimension of conversation. This is similar to Kantian approach to rationality. This similarity between Kant and Habermas made thinkers to charge Habermas' position as hyper-rationalism, which is not valid.

What is interesting is that Habermas reworked the tradition of Kant, which is visible in his transcendental dimension. Kant, for example, discusses the condition for the possibility of human knowledge and experience. A close observation of Habermasian framework of universal pragmatics and communicative competence deals with the issue, namely the conditions for the possibility of human knowledge and experience.

Kantian method of argument can be seen in Habermas' notion of ideal speech situation that deals with the universal and formal conditions of all speech acts. Habermas' concept of universal pragmatics tries to offer a foundation for the justification of the normative dimension of critical theory. He believes that the binding character of norms can be explained only if they have a rational foundation. Further, it should be constraint free and represent the common good. This is nothing but the Kantian claim that the understanding is the product of rational will. Universal pragmatics is an attempt to identify and reconstruct universal conditions of possible understanding. This is also due to the influence of Kant.

Habermas reconstructs the Kantian notion of reason so as to explain the importance of comprehensive reason. This comprehensive reason is the "communicative rationality" according to Habermas. He distinguishes different types of reason: instrumental, strategic and communicative reason. This, of course, is not new because Horkheimer also makes a distinction between instrumental subjective reason and critical reason. Marcuse also develops what is known as "libidinal rationality" or emancipatory reason against the repressive reason or subjectivist reason. But what is important in Habermas' theory of communicative reason is that he makes communicative reason, a more socially oriented one at the same time pointing out the limitations of the instrumental and the strategic reason. The importance of communicative rationality is explained by him as follows:

That communicative rationality, precisely as suppressed, is already embodied in the existing forms of interaction and does not first have to be postulated as something that ought to be is showed by the causality of the fate which Hegel and Marx.... Communicative reason operates in history as an avenging force.⁶⁰

In the *Theory of Communicative Action*, Habermas deals with four important themes, namely, (i) the theory of rationality, (ii) the theory of communicative action, (iii) the dialectic of social rationalization, and (iv) the critique of functional reason. He explains the importance of reason and how it played a major role in different philosophical thinking. According to him, philosophy is a theory of rationality. The significant aspect of *Theory of Communicative Action* is that here Habermas relates rationality to social theory through communication. A communicative action rests on rationally motivated agreement based reasons and grounds, rather than on coercion and force. The social actors, as members

of communicative community have the competency to distinguish between external nature, society and internal nature. He says:

"Communication is social interactions. It is the application of social use of language, which will result in understanding, which further focuses on the action co-ordinating effects of the validity claims offered in the speech-acts."⁶¹

This means that participants by offering validity claims establish intersubjective relations. This is based on rational motivation which accepts the validity claims. It implies that communicative action is basically connected to communicative rationality. Thus Kantian rationality has taken new dimension in the hands of Habermas. What exists as a mere rationality in Kant is now changed into communicative rationality. Habermas has another support in this direction. In his interesting essay, "What Is Enlightenment?" Foucault also articulates how his critical practices differ from that of Kantian critique, where necessary condition plays a role. He says:

"This criticism is not transcendental, and its goal is not that of making metaphysics possible: it is genealogical in its design and archaeological in its method... This critique will be genealogical in the sense that it will not deduce from the form of what we are, what it is impossible for us to do and to know, but it will separate out, from the contingency that has made us what we are, the possibility of no longer being, doing, or thinking what we are, do, or think."⁶²

The above passage clearly shows that there exists another alternative to transcendental thinking of Kant. Foucault who emerged two centuries after Kant observes the continuity of his post-Nietzschean genealogy with the classical critique of reason. But Foucault emphasizes the discontinuity also. He says:

If the Kantian question was that of knowing what limits knowledge has to renounce transgressing, it seems to me that the critical question today (is)... In what is given to us as universal, necessary, obligating, what place is occupied by whatever is singular, contingent, and the product of arbitrary constraints?⁶³

The questions of Foucault prove that he is for practical critique of reason. In the above essay, Foucault attempts to transcribe the Kantian Critique as an attitude that is addressed permanently to the discourses through which subject is constituted.⁶⁴ Foucault's view about the

relationship between knowledge, autonomy and political action does not presume the transcendental implications of pure reason as in the case of Kant. Each person is viewed as the subject of knowledge and the self is always situated within the control of social, economic and political institutions. The possibility of Enlightenment, according to Foucault, is not something connected with a priori necessity inscribed in and with practical reason.

In his discussion on Max Weber's theory of rationalization, Habermas analyses how in Marx, the rationalization of society is possible in the development of productive forces. He says that Weber analyzed the notion of rationality in a scientific context. It is here Habermas compares Condorcet with Kant. Habermas says that Condorcet presented a mathematical nature of rationality. Habermas argues:

"Like Kant, Condorcet too is impressed by the 'sure course' of this science. It becomes a paradigm for knowledge in general because it follows a method that raises the knowledge of nature above the scholastic debates of philosophers and reduces all previous philosophy to the status of mere opinion".⁶⁵

But Habermas also shows the difference between them. He says that like Kant, Condorcet did not offer the foundations of this methodological knowledge. But one common feature between them is both presuppose the unity of theoretical and practical reason. Further, in his discussion on Max Weber, Habermas deals with the concept of rationalization thesis and the critique of instrumental reason following Marx and Lukacs. Weber develops his concept of rationality, otherwise known as "formal rationality". For Lukacs, according to Habermas, formal rationality is a bridge between the commodity form and the forms of understanding analyzed by Kant. Lukacs analyses the notion of formal rationality at the level on which Hegel developed his critique of Kantian conception of knowledge. For Luckas, formal rationality is expressed in modern science. It is here the role of Kant is emphasized by Habermas through Luckas. Kant's critique of knowledge deals with the activity of the understanding which is expressed in these terms. Habermas concludes that the Kantian critique of knowledge reflects only reified structures of consciousness. Habermas refers to Dieter Henrich who, while dealing with Heidegger, talked about the philosophical self-interpretation of modernity. Henrich argues that how the critique of instrumental reason accepts the view that subjectivity can determine its accomplishments only

on the basis of its structures. But there is a problem of one falling into the trap of "metaphysics of reconciliation." Kant is a victim to this. Habermas argues that in the paradigm of consciousness which Kant is subscribing to, this is inevitable and hence Habermas supports the paradigm of linguistic philosophy, i.e., intersubjective understanding which is possible through communicative rationality.

It cannot be denied that Kant's influence on philosophical thinking has been immense, and his works remain of the most immediate contemporary relevance. It is because he has dealt with the most fundamental problem that confronts a philosopher and he tackled it in a more illuminating way than anyone has done before him. But in the post-metaphysical thinking, Kant has been evaluated so as to see how far he is acceptable at present. Thus, in the preceding discussion, I have tried to argue that Kant's transcendentalism was retrieved by Heidegger in his own way. We see some similarities between ontology and epistemology. But in the Habermas' writing there is an attempt to de-transcendentalize Kant. Whether Habermas has fully succeeded or not, it should be understood that Habermas could show the need to make the Kantian reason more relevant and applicable in the post-metaphysical thinking. This he could do by using the concept of communicative reason. What is important in post-metaphysical thinking is that philosophers have realized the need for transcending the Kantian notion of reason.

Notes and References

¹Kant died on 12 February 1804, less than two months before his 80th birth day. Kant's friend, J.G. Scheffner says that Kant's prolonged illness from 1799 onwards made him "ent-Kanted" or "de-Kanted". His illness made Kant's genius disappeared according to Scheffner.

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⁵N. Kemp Smith: *A Commentary to Kant's Critique of Pure Reason*, New York, Palgrave Macmillan, 2003, p. xxi.

⁶*ibid.*

⁷*ibid.* p. xxviii.

⁸*ibid.*, p. xlii.

⁹Manfred Kuehn: *Kant-A Biography*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2001, p. 235

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¹³*ibid.* B 25

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¹⁵*ibid.* A 490

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¹⁸Heidegger: *The Metaphysical Foundations of Logic*, (tr.), Michael Heim, Bloomington, Indiana University Press, 1984, pp. 164-5

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²⁵Marjorie Grene: *Martin Heidegger*, London, Bowes & Bowes, 1957, p. 66.

²⁶*Being and Time*, op. cit., p. 31

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²⁹*Being and Time*, op. cit., 20

³⁰*Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics*, op. cit. xvii.

³¹Heidegger: *Phenomenological Interpretation of Kant's Critique of Pure Reason*, (tr.), Parvis Emad and Kenneth Maly Bloomington, Indiana

University Press, 1997, p. 227

³²Habermas: (tr.) Jeremy J. Shapiro: *Knowledge and Human Interests*, London: Heinemann, 1972, p. 91

³³*ibid.* p.304

³⁴Habermas: *Between Facts and Norms*, Cambridge, MIT Press, 1996, See Chapter one.

³⁵Habermas: *On the Pragmatics of Communication*, M. Cook, (Ed.), Cambridge, MIT Press, 1998, p.42

³⁶Piaget: The Psychogenesis of knowledge and its epistemological significance in *Language and Learning*, (ed.), M. Piattelli-Palmerini, London, Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1980, p. 150

³⁷Habermas: *Post-Metaphysical Thinking: Philosophical Essays*, (tr.) William Mark Hohengarten, Cambridge, Polity Press, 1992, p. 47

³⁸Fred Dallmayr: *Polis and Praxis*, Cambridge, Mass, MIT Press, 1984, p. 158

³⁹Habermas: *Religion and Rationality*, (ed. and with an Introduction), Eduardo Mendieta, Cambridge, Polity Press, 2002, p. 91

⁴⁰Habermas: *Knowledge and Human Interests*, op. cit., p. vii.

⁴¹*ibid.*, p. 3

⁴²Garbis Kortian: Introductory Essay by Charles Taylor and Alan Montefiore, *Metacritique*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1980, p. 4

⁴³*ibid.* p.104

⁴⁴*Knowledge and Human Interests*, op. cit., p. 138

⁴⁵*ibid.* p.176

⁴⁶*ibid.* p.314

⁴⁷*Metacritique*, op. cit., p. 35

⁴⁸*ibid.* p.55

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⁵⁰*Metacritique*, op. cit., p. 79

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⁵²*ibid.* p.16

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⁵⁶*ibid.* p.84

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