

The double citizenship of human existence



The Double Citizenship of Human Existence Immanuel Kant's theory of knowledge has been one of the most influential in modern Western philosophy. His basic premise is that we do not experience the world directly, but we do so by using certain intrinsic cognitive concepts. "Appearances, to the extent that as objects they are thought in accordance with the unity of categories, are called phenomena. If, however, I suppose there to be things that are merely objects of the understanding and that, nevertheless, can be given an intuition, although not to sensible intuition, then such things would be called noumena." (A249) According to Kant, it is crucial to make a distinction between the two realms of phenomena and noumena.

Phenomena are forms of our intuition which are processed by the basic categories of our understanding through time and space, this constitutes our experience. He states that the things that we perceive are real and that they do not simply exist in our mind. Kant argued that we can only achieve knowledge of things as we perceive them, phenomena, on the foundation that we perceive things through a variety of cognitive filters. Without these cognitive filters the world would be meaningless to us. "We cannot make abstraction of the condition of sensibility, without doing away with the essential reality of this world itself."

The world of sense, if it is limited must necessarily lie in the infinite void. If this, and with it space as the a priori condition of the possibility of phenomena, is left out of view, the world of sense disappears. (CPR: 271)

Phenomena means that our knowledge, what we can know, is limited by our ability to perceive things. For example, because we require the cognitive concept of time to distinguish between events going on around us, while

trying to make sense of what we do, we cannot reach knowledge of anything which might be said to be outside of time.

We are so reliant on this concept of time that it is impossible for us to imagine a timeless realm, infinity, without using the concept of time. How we explain it is that it is a realm in which time has no beginning or end. Through the use of cognitive concepts to help us make sense of the world, Kant's theory is primarily sense based. However, this does not mean that he only believed in the existence of the sensible or physical realm. In fact, Kant believed that beyond the realm of phenomena, things as if they appear, there is a realm of noumena, things as they truly are.

He believed that the only way we can make sense of the idea of the noumenal realm is through our mind, our intellect. Kant argued that there must be, sensibly, things as they truly are, beyond the way we perceive things. However, they can never be experienced in the noumenal realm due to the fact we can only experience things as they appear to us, phenomena. Nevertheless, noumena must exist if for no other reason than to make sense of the world we perceive around us.

Case in point, even though people experience the same object as having a different color, shape, and/or texture, depending on many different reasons, one of which being where they stand in relation to it, it does not change the fact that sensibly the object must have a true form separate then the way it is perceived. According to Kant there are three ultimate modes of consciousness: Knowing, feeling and desiring. Knowing is understanding,

desiring is reasoning and feeling is judgment. Feeling is the intermediate space between noumena, reasoning, and phenomena, understanding.

This brings an intermediate space between ethics and science. This intermediate space is called aesthetics which is the beautiful and the sublime which is in nature and art. Kant then continues his theory on judgment by discussing natural philosophy which pertains to the concepts of nature; it is theoretical and comes from pure reason and understanding. While moral philosophy contains the concepts of freedom and action concepts, it is strictly practical reasoning.

The field of the supersensible is supplied by ideas. There is a transition from the sensory world, phenomena, to the supersensible world, noumena. This is the ground which is neither factual nor moral and it is called purpose. Purpose is provided by an act of judgment; the only place for truth is an act of judgment.

Judgment is defined as subsuming the particular in the universal. There are two types of judgment, determinant judgment where the universal is given and reflective judgment where only the particular is given. There are two types of purposes (meaning) in life and they are something added a priori to things, events, and actions. There is the theoretical purposiveness of nature which rests on the transcendental principle whereas the practical purposiveness of free will rests on the metaphysical principle.

The concept of a purposiveness of nature is the bridge that allows for the transformation of the sensible by the supersensible. In talking about morality, Kant offers a proof of freedom from the fact of moral agency to the

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truth of its condition of free will. Kant's claim is that he can ground free will based on the fact of morality. Grounding: each case of moral action contains its own instance of antinomy between causal determination and freedom.

In order to do something right there must, at least, be the possibility of that action having some real effect in the world, however, it must be done with no external influence. Morality requires both causality and freedom. There is two ways one can look at them self, operating in the phenomenal realm participating fully in causal regularities, or as a timeless thing in itself in the noumenal realm, wholly free. But one must truly think as them self as living in both realms at once, sensibly determined but intelligibly free. According to Kant, while pertaining to the phenomena and noumena.

We as “ dual citizens” in the world, must have the two realms coincide. In accordance with his judgment, an architect can design a house in which he believes to be aesthetically pleasing. At the same point and time it must also follow the laws of nature. An architect cannot build a house that does not work within both realms of the phenomena and the noumena. While discussing morals, Kant shows us that his theory applies here as well. When trying to live within the world, one's noumena and phenomena have to work together in order to form the proper moral code.