

A Review of Theory of Immanuel Kant: Distinguish of the Realm of Religion and Science

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Doi:10.5901/mjss.2015.v6n6s4p558

Abstract

As we know, Kant was deeply affected by the development of natural science, especially Newtonian science. However, as a philosopher, he has sought to explain the principles of natural science and for this purpose founded a very complex philosophical system. In his Philosophical system, Reason in two distinct areas of act and thought has a Different Sentences. He believes that in the realm of theoretical knowledge, wisdom has limited for religious faith to be opened. Kant sought to break with the cognitive and human knowledge in both theory and practice and belong to the field of science to Theoretical dimension and religion to practice Dimension Declare that science and religion should never be assumed that conflicting according to Kant, the religion founded on ethics. Hence the moral and ethical law takes us towards religion. Therefore, Kant Distinguish science dimension and religion dimension and eliminate Conflict between the two realms. In this paper, we will Try to investigate Kant's theory about Religion and Science dimensions, theoretically review The Distinguish between the two dimensions.

Keywords: Religion, Science, Epistemology, Immanuel Kant.

1. Introduction

One of the most important issues in the field of philosophy of religion is pertained to the issue of relationship between religion and science. In fact, this approach has been issued during the history of philosophy and theology from the time of Aristotle until now. But especially in the time of Galileo, the battle raised between him and the Church. Firstly, it has thought that the Church won the discussion, but after a period it cleared that it is the view of Galileo that is justified in the terms of distinguishing between religion and science. After him many thinkers and philosophers continued his main method, but they tried to reform his theory that was based on dividing between the domination of religion and science.

But it is Kant that presents the best justification about the quality of distinction between religion and science, because he divided between the realm of pure reason –which is science belongs to that- and the realm of practical reason – which religion related to that as a result of morals. One of the most advantages of his theory – which is combined from several theories-, is the coherency between its details. And because of that his theory has been able to be vivid and alive near three centuries up to now. Although, on the one hand, there have been some philosophers who followed him in this theory completely or partially and some of them tried to reform his theory or updated that or some of them have presented some theories that its foundations are based on the theory of Kant in distinguishing between religion and science. And on the other hand, there are many that have tried to critique his theory. And these kind of facing reveals the importance of his theory.

Because of this significance, we try to represent a review of the theory of Kant in the terms of independence between the realm of religion and science. And we believe that his theory will be alive –despite of some criticisms from who do believe in the view of dependence between religion and science- and yet, it will be controversial between philosophers of religion.

Also it should be mentioned that there are some recent works related to this theory of Kant which we suggest to read and they are including:

1. Kant on God, (Byrne, 2007),

2. In defense of Kant's religion (Firestone & Jacobs, In Defense of Kant's Religion, 2008),
3. Kant and theology at the boundaries of reason (Firestone, Kant and Theology at the Boundaries of Reason, 2009)
4. Letters on the Kantian philosophy (Leinhard, 2005),
5. Kant and new philosophy of religion (Firestone & Palmquist, Kant and New Philosophy of Religion, 2006)

1.1 *Metaphysics as the Specified Realm*

In the time of Descartes a great challenge appeared in the European philosophy in its epistemology. The conflict began between *rationalists* and *empiricists*. Kant knew about both schools of thought and started to solve the problem between them and to appear the reason of the conflict.

In fact in one hand the rationalists were preferred for the reason and intellect as the origin of human findings and there were not any importance for the empirical knowledge and science.

On the other hand empiricists were accrediting for the sensible and material sciences as the real and recognizable science. They assumed the general logical and intellectual laws as the branch and the tributary product of sensible knowledge and rational knowledge depends to the sensible science. Both sides had some deficiencies. For example the rationalism led to some extravagant theories like *Leibnitz's Monads* or *Malebranche theory of seeing God*. And the empirical philosophy led to the Hume's relativism (Haddad Adel, 2013, 209).

Kant for solving the tension believed in:

There can be no doubt that all our cognition begins with experience. ... But even though all our cognition starts with experience, that does not mean that all of it arises from experience (Kant, Critique of Pure Reason, 1996, B1).

1.2 *The Solution: Practical Reason*

After writing the *Critique of Pure Reason* which Kant argues in that for impossibility of catching to the knowledge of metaphysics, he goes to the realm of *practical reason*. He means by practical reason, human's reason in the aspect of practice. And Kant believes in the unity of theoretical and practical reason in the end. In fact the result of critique of practical reason will be the unity of both of them. He says:

On the other hand, the critique of practical reason, if it is to be complete, requires, on my view, that we should be able at the same time to show the unity of practical and theoretical reason in a common principle, since in the end there can only be one and the same reason, which must be differentiated solely in its application (Kant, Groundwork of the Metaphysic of Moral, 1964, 59).

Kant discusses about the philosophy of ethics in the books: *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals* (1785) and *Critique of Practical Reason* (1788). Also in these two books he wants to find some prior elements – like what he did before in the *critique of pure reason*- which are not experimental and even they are universal and necessary.

In this respect he tries to reach to a principle or some foundations in the moral knowledge which are not affected from material demands and are independent from tentative laws. These foundations will be the base of our moral behavior (Haddad Adel, 2013, 213-214). The question is why ethics is important for us in the view of Kant? In fact because ethics in his view is the base of religion, it is important for us to know that how Kant faces with that. And then the answer about the quality of relationship between religion and science in his view is related to this point.

And the next question is that is there any criteria for moral laws to distinguish between them and other laws? Or is there any concept for covering our moral concepts and for giving the authority and value to our behavior?

In the Kant's view, the answer is *Yes!* And that is the concept of *Good will*¹. He asserts many times in the *Groundwork of metaphysic of moral* (Copleston, 1981, 173) and also in the beginning of that book:

It is impossible to conceive anything at all in the world, or even out of it, which can be taken as good without qualification, except a good will (Kant, Groundwork of the Metaphysic of Moral, 1964, 61)

Here arises another question that what is the relation between this law ' which is whole and is not material and related to the domination of pure reason' and the sense or matter ' which is related to the domain of pure reason?

1. *Bonne Volonte*

1.3 Human's Freedom, Immortality of Soul and God as the Supreme Good

Kant firstly in the *critique of pure reason* in its famous section '*dialectic of pure practical reason*' explains some issues and questions pass in our mind which the passing is of the is the characteristic of the mind, but the mind itself and the pure reason is unable to find suitable answers for them. The mind in these problems necessarily will be involved to the conflict and paradox. The main numbers of these issues are: 1. *Freedom*, 2. *the immortality of Soul* and 3. *the existence of God*.

Then he in the *critique of practical reason*, with regard to the moral, tries to solve the problem and counts them as the *postulates* of practical reason.

2. The Explanation

The first issue is the problem of *freedom* in human. He tries to solve that by the issue of *obligation*. But we know that the problem of causality is remained yet in the nature which is used as the rule. Whether the freedom in the human, in the time of doing the moral duty, is above of any causality and it is without any rule?

He says that here the concept of causality and rule are different with the usual concept. In fact there is no any mechanical necessity, here is a kind reasonable obligation which is essential and constitutive for the for the human's freedom. Thus freedom means doing exactly according to the moral law and obeying that. An act only will be according of freedom, when it is corresponding to the moral law and this law will guarantee of freedom and will, for the act which obeys that law. In this regard freedom is the priori condition in human that gives the ability of doing according to the moral law. Because of that freedom is independent from our psychological issues and out of *time*. In fact human, in his view, is not free with regard to the nature, but on the other hand, the nature cannot counted as the essential difference for human, this is the reason which is essential and constitutive for human and reason in its practical aspect, recognizes the freedom as possible for him and accepts that as one of its *postulates*. The proof as was mentioned is the *obligation* (Mojtahedi, 1999, 118).

But on the other hand human finds by his reason that if he is free while he is obliged, these multiple moral behaviors, can be unite way which we call that as *the supreme or the perfect good*. But philosophically the problem is about the identity and the quality of the *good* and what is its definition?

Though there are many points of view in the philosophy about that good, but in Kant's vantage point, by deep attendance to the on the concept of *the supreme or the complete good*, there are two aspects which are not reducible to each other, because they are incongruous and constitutive inconsistent. These are 1. *virtue* and 2. *happiness*. Kant says:

In the highest good which is practical for us, that is, to be made real through our will, virtue and happiness are though as necessarily combined, so that the one cannot assumed by practical reason without the other also belonging to it (Kant, Critique of Practical Reason, 1997, 95).

2.1 Definition of Religion

With regard to what Kant said for the meanings of *freedom*, *immortality* and *God*, he knows himself as the believer to the religion and Christianity. But in his view there if not any essential different between religion and moral and religion is the moral itself with respect to the special respect. Religion in the Kant's view has two kinds: 1. religion with regard to itself, 2. religion in relation to others. He asserts to the aspect of first kind for moral. It means that the human is not ordered by any source except himself and his rational inner will (Haddad Adel, 2013, 219) In the beginning of *religion within the limits of reason alone*, he explains:

As morality is based upon the conception of man as a free agent who ... binds himself through reason to un conditioned laws, it stands in need neither of the idea of another Being over him, for him to apprehend his duty, nor of an incentive other than the law itself, for him to do his duty. ... Hence for its own sake morality does not need religion at all... by virtue of pure practical reason (Kant, Religion within the limits of Reason Alone, 1960, 3)

Religion and faith, thus, are the results of moral. The essence of religion is morality. The different between *God* of Kant and *God* of religions is that *God* of Kant doesn't order from the outward of human, despite of *God* of religions. And he adds that this imagination of externalism of God is from comparing God and His attributes to ourselves and our attributes.

There is not any figure for the authority of God which is in the religions and because of that the revelation and revealed religion is not important in the Kant's view of religion. The more importance is for the *natural religion* which is

recognizable by the natural capacity of reason.

Even his interpretation of Christianity, despite of believing to that, is according to his systematic foundations of religion. And the concepts like: *Original Sin*, *the Sacrifice of Isaac*, *the Supper* and etc. are interpreted to the moral type and agree with the natural reason of human. Here we cannot suppose any function for *the miracle*, because it is in conflict with the natural reason and also there is not any need to that with the moral rules. In the encyclopedia of religion has mentioned that:

Because miracles contravene the laws of nature, they cannot be reconciled with the use of reason. Both in theoretical and practical functions, human's reason appears crippled in the presence of miracles. Furthermore, he says, miracles are not essential for the functions of true religions, because these functions can stand securely on moral beliefs alone. In fact, any demand of for miracles as the authentication of religious beliefs betrays the lack of firm faith in the authority of moral commands, which are engraved upon the heart of man through reason (Eliade & Charles, 1993,251)

Also the religious rituals and practices in worshiping are not important for him. S. Korner affirms to this point:

For Kant all external worship is idle. 'Everything that man, apart from a moral way of life, believes himself to be capable of doing to please God is mere religious delusion and spurious worship of God.' This is a corner stone of Kant's philosophy of religion and Kant's life bears testimony to this conviction. His biographer and personal friend, R.B. Jachmann, tell us that Kant, although deeply religious, abstained from all external religious customs. In his later years certainly he did not worship in church (Korner, 1955,170)

He doesn't believe in the plurality of religions and knows the religions essentially unit. Korner adds:

2.2 Types of Religion

In his view there are two types of religions: the *revealed religion* and the *natural religion*. The *revealed religion* is a religion which before I consider it as my duty, I recognize it as a divine command. So it is my duty because it is a divine command and the criteria of being my duty, is being revealed from God. But *natural religion* is in the vice versa situation. In fact without any considering to the divine command I recognize that as my duty. In this respect the criteria of religion in the *natural religion* is duty, not the revelation of God (Kant, Religion within the limits of Reason Alone, 1960, 205-206) and then we can call this person as the *rationalist*. But we can suppose for a rationalist three steps in his rationalistic way.

The first step is that he denies all the divine revelation and he is called *naturalist*. The second step is that he recognizes the revelation, but he claims accepting the revelation is not necessary for religion, which will be called as *pure rationalist*. And finally, in the third step he says:

... But if he holds that belief in it is necessary to universal religion, he could be named the puresupernaturalist in matters of faith (Kant, Religion within the limits of Reason Alone 1960, 143)

Then he classifies the religion, not according to its origin, but he pays the attention to another aspect:

But with respect to its characteristics which make it capable of being shared widely with others to two kinds: first the natural religion, which everyone can be convinced with through his own reason. Second a learned religion, which a person can convince others through the agency of learning (Kant, Religion within the limits of Reason Alone 1960, 143)

The term *natural* which is mentioned in the Kant's terms like *natural religion*, has not its common meaning by his usage. Here the natural religion means the religion which is located in the human's nature based on his reason. In fact in the religious view all things even reason are the creation of God, but in the Kant view, because he supposes that yet he doesn't reach to the divine religion, reason is placed in contrast to God and because of that, Kant makes the natural religion against the revealed religion. Thus he means by natural religion, the religion which is based on pure practical reason and also he uses *natural religion* and *supernatural religion* with regard to this kind of reason. Hence he means by *natural religion*, the religion which is based on pure practical reason; and he means by *supernatural religion*, the divine and revealed religion.

Q: Does Kant's View in Reason and Religion Lead to Deism or Atheism?

A: Because of some ambiguity and difficulty in Kant's view, there are some interpretations of him that lead to deism or atheism.

Firstly about deism which is defined as "belief in a God, but rejection of all other articles of religious faith" (Wood

1991, 2) and a deist is a monotheist who believes in the goodness and providence of God, but refuses to embrace a revealed faith based on the biblical tradition (Wood 1991, 2) Kant contemporaries charged him as deist. Eliade explains:

Kant's idea of natural religion provoked the charge among his contemporaries that he was a deist. Deism was the view prevalent among the scientific-minded intellectuals of the eighteenth century that God does not intervene in the running of the universe because it has been placed under the working of immutable law since its creation (Eliade and Charles, 1993, 251)

In fact there are some evidences which support this view. Wood, in this sense proves.

The very title of Kant's principal work on religion, *Religion Innerhalb der Grenzen der bloßen Vernunft*, clearly raises the issue. The word "bloß" means "unaided or unassisted" i.e. without the aid or assistance of supernatural revelation. The reference of the title, therefor is precisely to the deist's natural or rational religion: a religion within the boundaries of unassisted natural reason, religion without the supernatural aid of miracles, signs or other divine revelations through mystical experience, ecclesiastical tradition or holy scripture (Wood, 1991, 2).

But he himself answers to this misgiving:

The title does not by itself necessarily imply that Kant embraces the deistic position that religion can get along without revelation (Wood, 1991, 2)

Kant in the second edition of 1794 adds a comment for the title:

Historical in the former, I will be able to consider the former as the *wider* sphere of faith, which includes within itself the later as a *narrower* one.

And then Wood adds:

Moreover, at crucial junctures Kant indicates that the religion of reason has need of revealed traditions: owing to "a special weakness in human nature." He says, a church cannot be grounded solely on the religion of unassisted reason, but requires an "ecclesiastical faith" based on an empirical revelation (Wood, 1991, 3).

Thus we cannot call him as a deist, such as we cannot call him as an atheist in precedence, in fact because of Kant's speaking about duty in the ethics, it seems we can smell a kind of atheism in his view – because he bases the religion on the ethics and our practical reason and innate capacity is the foundation of things which lead gradually to the belief of God. Hence our mind, in Kant's view, play the main role for believing to God, there are some interpretations of Kant's views which assert on a kind of atheistic beliefs arises of his views, for instance Feuerbach is an atheist philosopher and he tries to present this interpretation of Kant's views in the book *The Essence of Religion*. He asserts:

The existence of nature is not, as Theism imagines, based upon the existence of God, but *vice versa*, the existence of God, rather than the belief of in his existence, is only based on the existence of nature (Feuerbach, 2004, 8)

2.3 Relationship between Religion and Reason in General and Specified Meaning

If the religion and its teachings have been proved in any way and then religion had some propositions and beliefs in the realm of the science, how will be the relationship between religion and the scientific reasonability?

In fact Kant faced to the spreading the Newton's ideology which is leading to the seclusion or even destruction of the religious and ethical beliefs. In this regard – despite of distinction between the realm of religion and the area of science in the Kant thinking- he had a kind of trying to reconcile religious ideology and scientific ideology.

But the different between him and others who attempt to reconcile between them is that others generally accepts the scientific finding to the extent that are not in conflict with religious teachings. Thus if there be the conflict between them, they prefer the religion and its teachings. For instance they exclude the human soul from the general laws of the nature because they cannot solve the problem of spirituality with these laws.

Or they doubt about the absolute authenticity of science in this respect, or etc. even Newton himself had the mentioned approach in these cases. In this respect Kant believed that if the science is acceptable, it is acceptable in all its necessities. He was worried about both science and religion and wanted to define both of them against each other. Either the generality of the causality and the free-will in the deeds of humankind in his vantage point have to be observed. Thus a part of solution relates to the humanity and a part of that relates to the cosmos.

In the case of human, his solution is based on the special interpretation of the human system of cognition which he represents and leads to the special concept of the subject, object, the issue of existence and the causality. And in the

case of cosmos he distinguishes between *noumenon* and *phenomena*. The other solution is related to the practical reason. The scientific ideology and causation is appropriated to the realm of phenomena, but we cannot say anything about the realm of the *noumenon* and what or how are they (Bakhshayesh, 2006, 63- 64). Kant because believes the scientific ideology cannot satisfy the reason, completely.

2.4 Science and Religion as Separate Realms

From the Renaissance until the eighteenth century, there was an attempt to solve the conflict of science and religion by rationalizing faith and reducing it to the eternal elements which are included in what is wont to be called Deism. Antonio Aliotta in his article in the book *science, religion and reality* writes:

... Be called Deism: that is to say, to the consideration of God as the first cause of the order of the Universe and to the immortality of the soul. In this, rationalists and empiricists _ Leibnitz and Locke_ were in agreement. But this way of solving the conflict, with prevail during the period of Illuminism, couldn't satisfy, because at bottom it did not save the concrete reality of positive religion, but only its abstract intellectual content, which, properly speaking, is not religion, but philosophy; and further, because the possibility of demonstrating the existence of God and immortality a priori or a posteriori was not admitted by everyone (Aliotta, 1925, 151).

But despite of this kind of answer to the radical intellectualism which got firstly current there were some thinkers who are not agree with this approach for solving the pseudo problem, and they tried to solve the problem in another way, but their way, also, could not solve the problem completely. The mentioned writer brings some examples of the thinkers and their way as the evidence and adds:

The medieval mystics and Pascal later had already reacted against this cold and abstract intellectualism. Jean Jacques Rousseau, although he too moved in the circle of Deism, did not seek his foundations in an arid rationalism, but in ingenuousness of feeling.

"I don't want," says the Savoyard priest when expounding his profession of faith, "to argue with you, or to try to convince you. All I want to do is to expound what I think in the simplicity of my heart. Examine your own heart during my discourse; that is all I ask you to do." (Aliotta, 1925, 151)

In this time Kant presents his vantage point by throwing into relief the uselessness of trying to prove theoretically the existence of God and the immortality of soul. He distinguishes between pure reason and practical reason, although he tries afterwards to bring them into harmony with his doctrine of the primacy of the practical reason. In his view, religion finds his place in the ordering of the moral conscience. Only scientific certainty was truly objective for him. Moral certainty, based on subjective feeling, presented itself as a substitute with which one was to be contented for want of a better. Notwithstanding the doctrine of the primacy of practical reason which permitted one to pass the confines of experience, science really preserved its authority in the Kantian system.

But the radical defect of this pretended conciliation was the dualism of pure reason and practical reason, of phenomenon and noumenon, of necessity and liberty, because it is exactly of the world of phenomena that man must act, and because his liberty, relegated from noumenon, does not permit him to break through the necessarily rigid bond of the laws of experience. It was the task subsequent philosophers to overcome this dualism, and to show that reason is a myth and that liberty lies at the root of necessity, because the ordering of natural laws is freely created by the spirit. The credit of initiating this task, which was afterwards completed by Pragmatism, lies with Fichte (Aliotta, 1925, 151-2).

And finally, Kant reaches to the view of distinction of the realm of religion and science by the next explanation.

3. The Explanation

He, regarding to the critique of pure reason, believed that it cannot recognize and prove any religious propositions, because it only can recognizes the facts which can put in the channel of time and space and in the sense religious facts haven't any time and space – they are immaterial- so they are not able to effect in our mind like other natural and scientific facts and inter in the twelve categories of the understanding. Religion is related to the realm of practical reason.

This realm necessarily and conscionable recognizes what we should do and what we should not to do and recognizes them as the obligation and necessary, not as the goal. But these duties which are created in our creations surely have a creator, because we, ourselves, don't produce it in ourselves, and this creator is God. And then it shows that we have a soul that it has to be formal and ceremonious to these duties and this soul has immortality and in the

respect of immortality, he reaches to the belief in the existence of the Day of Judgment and resurrection. These three main facts constitute religion. In fact religion is built by these beliefs in the realm of practical reason (Khosropanah, 2006, 67-70).

In fact his view is a combination of empiricism and rationalism. In the realm of science he believes in empiricism and in the realm of religion and moral and practical reason he is a rationalist (Barbour, 1993, 76).

Thus Kant's philosophy –as Barbour states- was a response to science and religion of much greater epistemological complexity than the earlier response of Deism. He had great response for Newtonian science and insisted that claims of knowledge must be restricted to empirically based relations among natural phenomena (See Barbour, 1971, 77). Barbour adds:

Yet – in keeping with the biblical tradition and his own pietistic background- Kant attached great importance to moral choice, good and evil, sin and judgment; but he departed from that tradition in making ethics primary and central, and religion secondary and derivative. As a child of the age of reason, he interpreted ethics as obedience to universal rational principles; but he went beyond that age in his recognition of the limitation of "theoretical reason" and his use of "practical reason" as the basis of religion. To him both the natural and the moral order were rational, but they constituted independent realms (Barbour 1971, 77).

4. Conclusion

In this part, *firstly*, we have an investigation about the theory of Kant in the relationship between religion and science and here the quality of the distinction between religion and science in his view, was shown. In this regard the writer showed that how Kant tries to justify this kind of distinction by his epistemological mechanism.

In fact, he, in the first step, divides between two parts of reason: *pure reason* and *practical reason*. In the part of pure reason, he reaches to the *noumenon* which is the real of things, but we – the human system of thought- cannot reach to that. And then he gains to the *phenomenon* which is the appearance of things and human system of thought is in challenge with this part of knowledge. This part accompanies with the twelve categories of understanding that *time* and *space* are including of the duodecimal categories.

However pure reason with all its properties, limited to the material and physical Knowledges that after him it populated by the name *science*. Religion with all its teachings, in Kant point of view, has not any place and it belongs to the practical reason.

In the second step, he formulizes practical reason as the origin and foundation of all moral commands and duties. Practical reason is the only means that has the ability of understanding the moral absolute duties. And then he tries to justify and argue for three main elements of moral findings which are the bases of religion: God, immortality of the soul and freedom of human. In the respect of these three roots he reaches to the religion. But his religion is completely autonomy and –in some interpretations of his view- a kind of deism that leads to the *natural theology*. Because of that he presents a new definition of religion which his in coherency by his system of thought.

Shortly he is successful in representing a proved system which can be justified his theory of distinction between religion and science. But his theory, despite of many advantages, is full of criticisms and problems.

Thus, *secondly*, we tried to gathering the criticisms which are in the Islamic books and are guided by Muslim scholars –despite of the magnitude of them, the paper has contained many of them. These critiques are divided to two parts: 1. Most of them are related to the Islamic philosophy and epistemology; 2. some of them are arises from the Islamic teachings including the verses of the Quran and narrations. Finally Islamic teachings are not agreeing with the way which Kant goes.

5. Future Research Directions

It is suggested for other researchers in the future that try 1.to justify more clearly how Kant presents his theory about distinction between religion and science. 2. Also to investigate about the thinkers and philosophers whose he effects on them in the terms of inheritance of Kant thinking. 3. And finally about the criticisms of Kant system of thought.

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