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A PRIORI

The notion of the *a priori* plays a very important role in Kant's philosophy. Equally important are his distinction between analytic and synthetic judgements and his notion of necessity. In *Section II* of his *Introduction* in the *Critique of Pure Reason* Kant introduces the distinction between *a priori* and empirical judgements and gives two marks by which an *a priori* judgement could be recognised with certainty. These marks are strict universality and necessity. All *a priori* judgements do possess these marks and these are absent in all empirical judgements. According to Kant, these two marks are inseparable from one another, but in the actual employment of these two marks he advises us to use each mark separately. He says, " ... Since in the employment of there criteria the contingency of judgements is sometimes more easily shown than their empirical limitation, or, as sometimes also happens, theirs unlimited universality can be more convincingly proved than their necessity, it is advisable to use the two criteria separately, each by itself being infalliable."[1] The object of the paper is to analyse and examine the nature of these two marks and to show (1) that Kant uses the word ' necessity ' in two different senses, (2) that if the word ' necessary ' is understood in the classical Leibnizian sense, then contrary to Kant's claim the two marks of *a priori* are not inseparable (i. e. coextensive) and (3) that understood in *this* sense, necessity becomes the mark only of analytic judgments, and strict universality alone has to be a mark of synthetic *a priori* judgements.

In *Section III* of the *Introduction* of the *Critique* Kant introduces his famous distinction between analytic and synthetic judgements. Then in trying to establish the relationship between *a priori*/empirical judgements on the one hand and analytic/ synthetic judgements on the other, he says that all analytic judgements and only some synthetic judgements are *a priori*, thus yielding two subclasses, viz. those of analytic *a priori*, and of synthetic *a priori* judgements. Though he calls both these kinds of judgements *a priori*, there is nevertheless a great difference

between the necessity which each kind possesses. An analytic judgement is a partially identical statement, its predicate being part of the concept of the subject term. Its denial involves a contradiction, and is thus *logically* necessary, according to Leibniz' definition of 'necessary'. In synthetic judgements the predicate lies outside the subject term, and is connected with it through some third term. The denial of these judgements is possible. Kant's synthetic *a priori* judgements, therefore, though *a priori*, will be logically contingent; but according to Kant's Criterion of *a priori* must be necessary also. It is clear hence that the sense of ' necessity' as used of the synthetic *a priori* judgements must be different from the sense of the necessity of analytic *a priori* judgements.

The sense of necessity in synthetic *a priori* judgements—one may call it the transcendental sense—is Kant's own discovery. But he appears to use the term in these two senses indescriminately all over the *Critique*, and it is only quite late in *Critique* in the transcendental analytic that his sense of necessity becomes clear. Therefore when Kant speaks of the marks of *a priori* knowledge, viz. Universality and necessity, the reader, familiar with the only sense of necessity the—Leibnizian sense—does not suspect that in addition to this Leibnizian sense, there is another sense of necessity intended by Kant, and that he makes frequent shifts from one sense to another. The following passages in the *Introduction* to the *Critique* will bear this fact out. While dealing with analytic judgements, Kant says, 'That a body is extended is a proposition that holds *a priori* and is not empirical. For, before appealing to experience, I have already in the concept body all the conditions required for my judgement. I have only to abstract from it, in accordance with the principle of contradiction, the required predicate, and in so doing can at the same time become conscious of the *necessity*[2] of the judgement—and that is what experience could never have taught me'[3]. But on the next page, while dealing with synthetic *a priori* judgements, Kant takes the example of the law of causation, viz. the statement 'Everything which happens has a cause'. He says that the statement is clearly synthetic, for the concept of cause lies entirely outside the concept of any thing which occurs. But further he also says that the predicate belongs to the subject in this statement with

necessity. This cannot be effected by means of experience, 'because the suggested principle has connected the second representation with the first not only with greater universality, but also with the character of *necessity*,[4] and therefore completely *a priori* on the basis of mere concepts.'[5] Only two lines later in the same paragraph Kant goes on, '... analytic judgements are very important, and indeed *necessary*,[6] but only for obtaining that clearness in the concepts which are requisite for such a sure and wide synthetis as will lead to a genuinely new addition to all previous knowledge.' These passages clearly show how Kant shifts from one sense of necessity to another and back again. From these passages it is also clear that from the fact that a given statement is *a priori*, nothing regarding the kind of necessity it has can be clearly known.

With these two different senses of necessity in mind, when one examines Kant's statement about the marks of *a priori* judgement that they are inseparable, one is faced with difficulties. According to Kant there are synthetic *a priori* judgements in mathematics and natural sciences. These judgements however, will not be logically necessary, because they are synthetic. They would, therefore, have to be necessary only in his transcendental sense, a sense which is compatible, with Leibnizian notion of contingency. It is clear from this that it is the logical necessity that would be inseparable from universality in analytic judgements alone. It is thus owing to the two different senses of necessity that are involved in Kant's theory of *a priori* judgements, the marks viz. the universality and necessity of a priority do not seem to be inseparable (or coextensive) however the word 'necessary' is understood.

Kant says that we require a criterion by which to distinguish with certainty *a priori* from empirical knowledge. It is obvious that the criterion must be more evident than that of which it is criterion. That is to say, if the necessity of a judgement is to serve as a mark of a priority, it would have to be discernible more easily than a priority. But this is far from being the case in respect of transcendental necessity. This sense of necessity is so far from being obvious that it has actually to be proved, as e. g. Kant actually does in the *Second Analogy* for the principle of causality. In the case of synthetic *a priori* judgements, therefore, where Leibnizian

logical necessity is completely absent and the other sense is yet to be proved and which still remains undiscerned from the first, the only mark that one is left with is strict universality. It seems, therefore, that of the two marks given by Kant, only universality may serve as the genuine mark of a priority.

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NOTES

1. Critique of Pure Reason, Tr. Norman Kemp Smith, B-4, P. 44, Read in a symposium on *A priori* during the 56th Session of the Indian Philosophical Congress at Bhubaneshwar from 27th to 30th December, 1981.
2. Underlines added.
3. *Critique* : B-12, P. 49.
4. Underlines added.
5. *Critique* : B-12, P. 51.
6. Underlines added.