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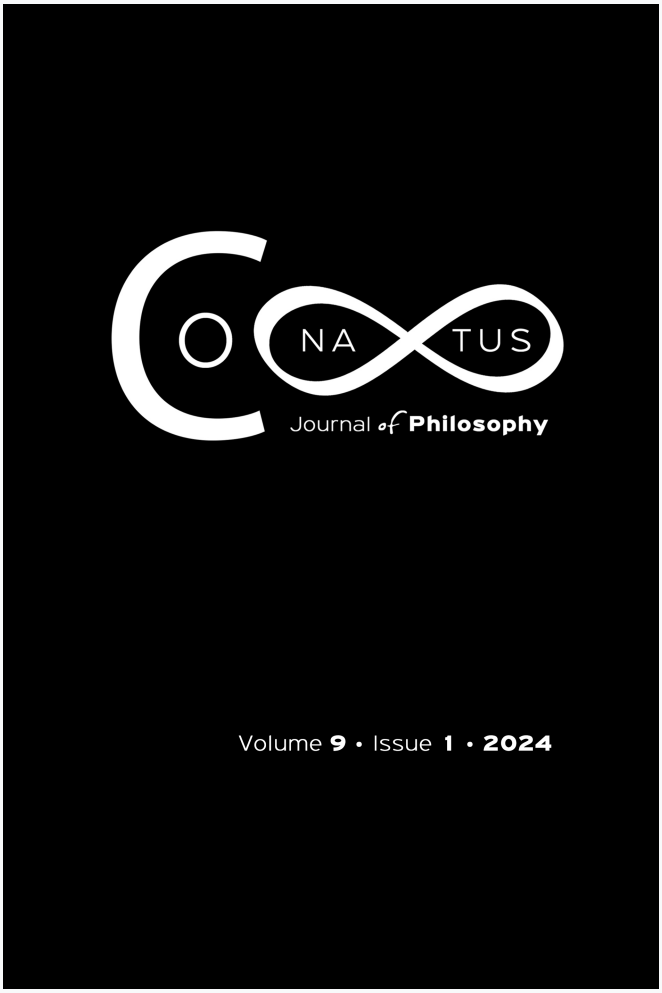

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Ikechukwu Onah, Anayochukwu Kingsley Ugwu

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Kant's Thought Formation and the Role of the Mind: A Groundwork for Development

Ikechukwu Onah
University of Nigeria Nsukka, Nigeria
E-mail address: kingsley.onah@unn.edu.ng
ORCID iD: https://orcid.org/0000-0002-0456-8870

Anayochukwu Kingsley Ugwu
Madonna University, Nigeria
E-mail address: anayochukwujp@gmail.com
ORCID iD: https://orcid.org/0000-0003-0465-5277

Abstract

This paper argues that no form of meaningful development can be discussed without an incursion into the realm of consciousness, from which ideas emanate. This paper demonstrates that human civilization is driven by notions such as ideas, imaginations, concepts, plans, and projects which are germane to social development. An examination of Kant's theory of concept formation reveals that though objects are given to us by means of sensibility, it is through the understanding that concepts arise. The mind therefore becomes the 'breeding' ground from which our ideas are generated and organized. In Kant's analysis of the faculty of understanding, he noted that there are a priori pure intuitions and sets of categories such as Quality, Relation, Modality that organize particular sensations into unified objects of experience. This capacity of the mind enables it to produce or generate ideas within its own operations. Ideas generated are used to recreate our world. This paper provides a conceptual framework to explicate the foundation of development. Using the method of analysis, this essay concludes that the basis of development – social, economic, and cultural – is hinged on the nature and role of the mind.

Keywords: *Kant; development; civilization; mind; thought-formation; a priori*

I. Introduction

This essay comprises two dimensions. The first dimension is a close and meticulous analysis of Kant's theory of thought formation, which takes the mind as containing some *a priori* no-

tions and having the capacity to structure and organize the phenomenal world by imposing these *a priori* concepts on it, thus, providing a distinct systematic basis for seeing the mind as an active entity. Prior to Kant, a study of Brentano's bucket theory and Hume's empiricism reveals that the mind was understood as a passive element or object with little or no role in the epistemic grasp of reality in the corporeal-existential world. The function of the mind was simply understood as a receptor of sense data. Here the existential world which constitutes things-in-the-world imposes its nature on the mind. This means that the mind has no innate capacity or ability to perform or function, such as assigning pattern and order in the cosmic universe. Consequently, it can be assumed that any form of development which results from this process lacks a distinct framework from which the idea arose.

In what follows, the world, preceding Kant's revolution (reconciliation of sensibility and understanding), with all the forms of advancement and progress could be viewed as a product of blind "Will" or 'universal cosmic reason,' with no clear framework from which the thought of innovations and inventions emanate from. That is, it could be taken that all forms of development witnessed by the world thus far were caused by the intervention of a necessary element and universal determinate principle or intelligence, with little or no succinct basis for explaining the profundity of human thoughts and particularly the origin of these thoughts. On the contrary, the human intellect has a tremendous role to play in the sundry forms of development that have struck the human sphere of existence. Kant's theory of concept formation has explicitly buttressed this point. Also, history and the evolution of societies hold this true.

The second dimension is the conceptualization of the term development. Some scholars conceive development as the handiwork of the 'Universal Mind.' Some see development as a clash of opposites – thesis, anti-thesis, and synthesis. Scientists, especially humanists, see development as the human's endeavor or exertion. Be that as it may, it can be taken as a fact that development is not a concrete phenomenon but an idea or concept in the mind that is transformed into material or concrete form for the utilization or benefit of mankind. Humans have witnessed diverse forms of development since the history of the world. Development can be seen as the human's conscious effort to create and recreate his environment so as to become more and more discernable and habitable. It is the focus on this consciousness as an idea or abstract concept that brings to limelight the indispensability of mental cognition. Apart from this consciousness, development is also seen as an improvement on what already exists. This, according to Kant, is

possible because of the transcendental ability of the mind to organize, unite, order, and re-order objects or things in the existential world. Every tangible development first started as an idea in the human mind.

Now, the influx of ideas, concepts, plans, and projects from the realm of mental cognition or human faculty of understanding dates back to the beginning of human civilization. These ideas, concepts, plans, and projects in the various circles of intellectual disciplines have shown enough or more than enough evidence to explain and underscore the source of development, civilization, innovation, creativity, and technological advancement since the emergence of *Homo sapiens* on the planet earth.

The human beings (as a species) are endowed with natural rationalistic and metaphysical components which provide the basis for the comprehension of the history of human civilization, beginning from the Stone Age to the contemporary age of science, technology, and artificial intelligence. Man, as an ontological being, is capable of using his intellect or mind independently of sense experience in creative enterprise and innovation, which significantly bring about development. Thus, the metaphysical operation and potentiality of the human mind is undeniable. This is because of the astonishing breakthroughs and progress made in the sundry fields of research by innovative thinkers as seen for example, in physics (e.g., Isaac Newton's invention of reflecting telescope, theory of light and color, discovery of calculus, developed laws of motion, devised law of universal gravitation, advanced early modern chemistry; Albert Einstein's quantum theory of light, special theory of relativity, Avogadro's number, photoelectric effect, wave-particle duality etc., and Michael Faraday's discoveries of electromagnetic induction and the laws of electrolysis, etc.), medicine, sciences, social sciences, engineering, technology, arts, artificial intelligence, etc. These breakthroughs are all products of pure and pensive cognition.

The aim of this essay is to demonstrate the reality and basis of development, using Kant's conception and analysis of the human mind (especially societal advancement as a product or outcome of mental operation or consciousness). This is because "Kant is interested in moral progress, and this again as it is applied to the human race as a whole, to the human race in its social capacity, organized in societies."[1] In other words, this essay seeks to argue that development is not a creation *ex-nihilo* but a possibility that originates or springs from the mind of human.

[1] Christos Grigoriou, "'Enthusiasm' in Burke's and Kant's Response to the French Revolution," *Conatus – Journal of Philosophy* 7, no. 1 (2022): 61-77.

II. Kant's conception and analysis of the human mind

Kant's critical philosophy which culminated in the investigation into the possibility of knowledge (Kant's synthetic *a priori*) was instigated by Hume's radical denouncement of any form of rational and scientific knowledge. In other words, Kant asserted that he was woken up from his "dogmatic slumber" by Hume's skepticism on the possibility of indubitable foundation of scientific and metaphysical knowledge. This argument is well captured by S. E. Stumpf thus:

> "I openly confess," he said, "that the suggestion of David Hume was the very thing which many years ago first interrupted my dogmatic slumber and gave my investigations in the field of speculative philosophy quite a new direction." But Kant said, "I was far from following (Hume) in the conclusions at which he arrived." Kant rejected Hume's final skepticism.[2]

With a view to establishing a firm conclusion on the apparent ambivalence between the theories above, Kant thought it necessary to embark on the analysis of the human mind. First, he had to meticulously study the meaning, interpretation, and function which his predecessors assigned to the operations of the mind, particularly the rationalist and the empiricist philosophers, before making his submissions. In both views, he discovered that his predecessors, particularly the empiricists, treated the mind as a passive element incapable of affecting the natural world, serving merely as a receptor of sense impressions.

Kant was not impressed by this interpretation and function that was assigned to the nature of the mind because it excludes the possibility of "synthetic *a priori*" knowledge. He thus moved beyond this flaccid and passive conception of the mind to the real operations of the human mind for which he provided a commendable analysis in the form of a revolution. Before we start to analyze Kant's revolutionary theory of the mind, it is pertinent to ask if there is any relationship between the mind and nature itself. To answer this question, we will turn to Kant's Copernican revolution. Meanwhile, the mind, in Kant's analysis, cannot cognize or come to the knowledge of realities in the noumena world which he called "thing in itself; or 'intelligible object.'"[3]

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[2] Samuel Enoch Stumpf, *Elements of Philosophy: An Introduction* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1993), 298.

[3] Graham Bird, *Kant's Theory of Knowledge* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1962), 19.

Some thinkers before Kant held the mind to be passive. The relationship between the mind and nature was misconstrued. Jacob Needleman appropriately captured it this way:

> Until now, Kant says, man has completely misunderstood this relationship, until now he was believed that true knowledge, true ideas, involved a sort of mental mirroring of the order of nature – the mind forming concepts that accurately reflect external reality. At the deepest level Kant says this cannot be true. On the contrary, the opposite is true. The order of nature conforms to the structure of the mind [...] reason itself.[4]

The mind was viewed as an inactive principle, but Kant has stated categorically that reason (mind) is the active principle, and that nature is the passive principle. He did in philosophy exactly what Copernicus did in the sciences. Just as Copernicus had shown that the motions of the heavens are determined by the motion of the earth, so Kant demonstrated that the laws of nature are put into nature by the mind, rather than being simply discovered as independent of the mind.[5] Given Kant's analysis of *phenomena* and *noumena*, Kant seems to have created a dual world. Hence, Bochenski argues that "so reality is split into two worlds, the one empirical and phenomenal which is invariably subject to the laws of mechanics, and the other a world of things-in-themselves, of "noumena" to which reason cannot attain."[6]

By relating this perspective of the motions of the heavens vis-à-vis the earth to epistemology, Kant asserted that the only way we can be sure of certainty about the basic laws of nature, such as the law of causation, is to set aside our erroneous knowledge, "that it is things that impress their nature on the mind." Whereas the right position is that it is actually the mind that impresses its form/nature on things. This view is clearly articulated thus:

> "Hitherto it has been assumed that all our knowledge must conform to objects" writes Kant in his preface to the *Critique of Pure Reason*, the single most influential work of

[4] Jacob Needleman, *The Heart of Philosophy* (London and Melbourne: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1983), 172-173.

[5] Ibid., 173.

[6] I. M. Bochenski, *Contemporary European Philosophy*, trans. Donald Nicholl and Karl Aschenbrenner (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1956), 5.

> modern philosophy. But Kant goes on; this assumption must be set aside as regards our knowledge of the fundamental order of nature. If knowledge must always conform to objects, we could never have absolute certainty about the basic laws of nature, such as the law of causation. We do have such certainty-a universe that does not obey such laws is simply inconceivable-even though we have no direct, sensory experience of these laws.[7]

Kant, in his assessment of the nature of the human mind, pointed out that the mind is naturally configured or structured to exert influence on objects. He came to this conclusion because it was feasible to acquire *a priori* knowledge of objects and also to reassess the hierarchical relationship between the mind and nature, as seen in Nicholas Copernicus' revolution in astronomy, as Kant himself affirms in the *Critique* that:

> We must therefore make trail whether we may not have more success in the tasks of metaphysics, if we suppose that objects must conform to our knowledge. This would agree better with what is desired, namely, that it should be possible to have knowledge of objects *a priori*, determining something in regard to them prior to their being given. We should then be proceeding precisely on the lines of Copernicus' primary hypothesis. Failing of satisfactory progress in explaining the movements of the heavenly bodies on the supposition that they all revolved around the spectator, he tried whether he must not have better success if he made the spectator to revolve and the starts to remain at rest.[8]

Therefore, according to Kant, the nature of the mind is such that it possesses its own form, to which objects in the empirical or experiential world must conform inevitably. We shall now turn to the next phase of Kant's conception of the human mind.

III. Constitution of the mind and ontology

The constitution, the nature of the human mind as well as the possibility of the mind to conceive and grasp knowledge *a priori* were of concern

[7] Needleman, 173.

[8] Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, trans. Norman Kemp Smith (London: Macmillan, 1953), 3:12-13.

to Kant. The mind's capacity to comprehend and conceptualize objects in the external world is not a topic of much debate. However, the organization of these ideas in the mind and their replication in concrete form to establish order in our environment is crucial. It presupposes that events and activities in the external world are the creation and product of the mind. In other words, the mind becomes the springboard from which all activities in the external world take their root. Before looking at the constitution of the mind, what precisely is the meaning of ontology? It is necessary to clarify and conceptualize this term.

The term "ontology" was coined by scholastic writers in the 17th century. Rudolf Goclenius, who mentioned the word in 1636, may have been the first user but the term was such a national Latin coinage and began to appear so frequently that disputes about priority are pointless.[9] Many writers such as Abraham Calovisu used it interchangeably with *metaphysica* while others used it as the name of a subdivision of metaphysics, the other subdivisions being cosmology and psychology. "Thus, ontologia as a philosophical term of art was already in existence when it was finally canonized by Christian Wolf (1679-1754) and Alexander Gottieb Baumgarten (1714-1762)."[10]

In the series of lectures given from 1765 to 1766, Kant treated ontology as a subdivision of metaphysics that included rational psychology but distinguished it from empirical psychology, cosmology, and what he called the "Science of God and the world." He refers to it as the more general properties of things and also as the difference between spiritual and material beings.[11] He eventually resolved the matter after he came up with the *Critique of Pure Reason*. Michael Gelven offered a concise and impressive interpretation of Kant's perspective on ontology:

> Kant's ontology aims at demonstrating that finite human reason transcends the boundaries of scientific categorizing that occur in physics and mathematics which both depend on the ability of the mind to distinguish between appearance and reality. Kant however was not just concerned with the possibility of mathematics and physics, but with a possibility of science in general is possible due to the possibility of metaphysics itself which is ingrained in man and which

[9] Paul Edwards, ed., *The Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, Vols. 3 and 4 (New York: Macmillan and the Free Press, 1967), 542.

[10] Ibid.

[11] Ibid.

> depicts the autonomy of human thought to metaphysics and hence, to as well scientificize. It is for this reasons that Kant dubbed his brand of philosophy transcendental idealism. But this transcendental perspective accommodates epistemological inquires and forms the ground of human freedom and responsibility.[12]

For a more lucid view of the term, the definition offered by the Chamber's Twentieth Century Dictionary will suffice here. It defines ontology as:

> The science that treats of the principles of metaphysics [...] the nature and essence of things: Ontology is a central part of metaphysics. It borders on questions like: Does anything exist necessarily? Is it necessary that something no matter what, should exist? It is concerned with the existence of material objects, minds, persons, universals, numbers and facts and so on.[13]

The mind, which is the focus of this essay, is not an empirical or sensual substance but a metaphysical framework from which our ideas originate and are organized and translated into concrete phenomena. Its functions cannot be precisely experimented on or explained scientifically. Many scholars[14] have corroborated their positions with this, though from another conceptual perspective. It remains the most influential element in Kant's theory of thought formation and transcendental idealism. It is not only the seat of intellectual activities but also the citadel of moral flurry as well as creativity and innovation. It is logical to talk about concept formation (and to some extent, transcendental idealism) as the foundation for holistic development in the context of all these functions attributed to the mind. Brook provided more insights into Kant's conception of the mind thus:

> Three ideas define the basic shape ('cognitive architecture') of Kant's model and one its dominant method. They have all become part of the foundation of cognitive science.

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[12] Michael Gelven, *A Commentary on Heidegger's* Being and Time*: A Section-by-section Interpretation* (New York: Harper and Row, 1970), 5-6. Quoted from C. Okoro's unpublished Doctoral Dissertation "Kant's Ontology," (2001), 144-145.

[13] See Maduabuchi F. Dukor, *Theistic Humanism: Philosophy of Scientific Africanism* (Lagos: Noble Communications Network, 1994), 19.

[14] Anayochukwu Kingsley Ugwu, "An Igbo Understanding of the Human Being: A Philosophical Approach," *Conatus – Journal of Philosophy* 7, no. 1 (2022): 135-181.

> 1. The mind is a complex set of abilities (functions). (As Meerbote 1989 and many others have observed, Kant held a functionalist view of the mind almost 200 years before functionalism was officially articulated in the 1960s by Hilary Putnam and others.)
> 2. The functions crucial for mental, knowledge-generating activity are spatio-temporal processing of, and application of concepts to, sensory inputs. Cognition requires concepts as well as percepts.
> 3. These functions are forms of what Kant called synthesis. Synthesis (and the unity in consciousness required for synthesis) are central to cognition.[15]

In order to capture explicitly Kant's conception of the mind, we shall simply delineate this sub-section into two parts: starting from the categories of understanding and ending with the transcendental apperception of the mind. Finally, we will be able to decipher the nature and the workings or operations of the human mind and later on see how this relates to the heart of this essay which partially focuses on idealism/metaphysics as an essential tool for evolving meaningful development in the society.

IV. The categories of understanding

Kant asserted that the human mind possesses a faculty of understanding. This faculty makes it possible for the mind to exert or impose its forms on objects in nature. It is this exertion that makes it possible for things to be cognized. These "forms" are *a priori* pure intuitions like that of space and time. Basically, these sets of categories according to Kant are quality, quantity, relation, and modality. Russell, reflecting on Kant's analysis of them, articulated these points distinctly:

> There are, however, *a priori* intuitions, these are the twelve "categories," which Kant derives from the forms of the syllogism. The twelve categories are divided into four sets of three: (1) of quantity; unity, plurality, totality; (2) of quality; reality, negation, limitation; (3) of relation: substance-and-accident, cause-and-effect, reciprocity; (4) of modality; possibility, existence, necessity. These are sub-

[15] Andrew Brook and Julian Wuerth, "Kant's View of the Mind and Consciousness of Self," *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Spring 2023 Edition), eds. Edward N. Zalta and Uri Nodelman, https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/spr2023/entries/kant-mind/.

> jective in the same sense in which space and time are, that is to say, our mental construction is such that they are applicable to whatever we experience.[16]

Kant went further to describe these sets of categories as "original pure concepts of synthesis, which belong to the understanding, for it is by them alone that it can understand something in the manifold of intuition, that is, think an object in it."[17] These sets of categories are intrinsic and innate. Kant refers to them as spectacles or lenses through which the mind visualizes and configures things in nature. Beyond these forms, intellectual knowledge of the empirical cosmos is impossible. To this end, Kant has shown that a wrong application of the categories of human understanding breeds philosophical confusion.[18] In all, the faculty of understanding (mind) is the seat of intellectual cognition, the source of ideas, the podium of concept creation and platform for innovation and pro-activeness.

In order to make a distinction between "category/categories," "intuition," and "ideas," reference must be made to Kant's notion of representation as expressed in his well-known passage in the first *Critique*. "Kant regards an intuition as a conscious, objective representation – this is strictly distinct from sensation, which he regards not as a representation of an object, property, event, etc., but merely as a state of the subject."[19] Kant considered categories as concepts that apply to objects in general, determining their intuition according to one of the logical functions for judgments. He believed that categories are what makes objects in general possible. He called them predicates.[20] Ideas are simply mental creations of the mind. The activities of intuition and by extension categories give birth to ideas. These ideas are however transformed into concrete realities.

V. Transcendental apperception

In the *Critique of Pure Reason,* Kant talked about transcendental deduction of the categories.[21] He elucidated the meaning of transcendental

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[16] Bertrand Russell, *A History of Western Philosophy* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1945), 708.

[17] Richard H. Popkin and Avrum Stroll, *Philosophy Made Simple* (New York: W. H. Allen & Co. Ltd, 1969), 136.

[18] Jim I. Unah, "The Object of Philosophy is the Logical Clarification of Thoughts – Wittgenstein," *The Nigerian Journal of Philosophy* 16, nos. 1-2 (1997): 25.

[19] Andrew Janiak, "Kant's Views on Space and Time," *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Summer 2022 Edition), ed. Edward N. Zalta, https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/sum2022/entries/kant-spacetime/.

[20] Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason,* 3: 95-96.

[21] Kant, 85-130A, 117-169B.

apperception. It is this action of the mind that makes it possible to have a unified grasp of the world around us. Apperception is presented by Immanuel Kant as a modeling device, as the subjective means to make selections over that speculative content in order to bring them to systematic unity, and consciousness as a normative state in which a contextually limited representation becomes discernable or conceivable.[22] The mind, according to Kant, is capable of transforming raw data received by our senses into a coherent and organized form. "But this led Kant to say that the unity of our experience must imply a unity of the self, for unless there was a unity between the several operations of the mind, there could be no knowledge of experience."[23] These several operations of the mind include *inter-alia*; sensation, imagination, remembering, memorizing, synthesizing, etc.

Thus, it must be the same self that at once senses an object, remembers its characteristics, and imposes the forms of space and time and the category of cause and effect, on it. All these activities must occur in some single subject; otherwise, knowledge would be impossible. And more so, if one subject had only sensations, another only memory, and so on, sensible manifold could never be unified.[24] Kant called it the "transcendental unity of apperception," what is also referred to as the "self." Furthermore, when ideas are accepted into consciousness, they are said to be admitted into the whole of our consciousness. By this process, ideas are said to be apperceived, and the indication of such apperception is the affixing to the idea of the phrase 'I think.' T. D. Weldon elaborated on this view when he said this of Kant's transcendental deduction of the categories:

> It will be granted that every idea which can conceivably occur to me must be capable of conscious apprehension. It must admit of being accepted into that whole which I call my consciousness. To be thus admitted is to be apperceived, and the sign of such apperception is the prefixing to the idea of the phrase 'I think'. No idea, then, can be entertained by me which is not capable of being apperception. But the whole of the ideas which I entertain constitute together a unity which is my conscious self, and this unity is

[22] Lucas Ribeiro Vollet, "An Interpretation of Kant's Theory on the Representation of Possible Experiences: High Speculative Representation and Fine-Grained Knowledge," *GNOSI: An Interdisciplinary Journal of Human Theory and Praxis* 5, no. 1 (2022): 74.

[23] Samuel Enoch Stumpf, *Philosophy: History and Problems* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1994), 309.

[24] Ibid.

> not a mere aggregate, for if it were, I should have a self as variegated and diverse as the ideas of which I am conscious. Rather it must be a synthetic or connected unity, intellectual and not sensuous in character.[25]

The unity of apperception is not precisely something produced by understanding, it is simply the understanding itself. It is also equated to the faculty of knowledge since understanding is the faculty of knowledge. The faculty of knowledge is the pivot of cognition or reflection, thus "to think is to unite ideas by receiving them into synthetic unity of apperception."[26]

VI. What is development?

The term "development" cannot be easily deciphered generically unless it is narrowed down to a specific context. It has been used in myriad senses to connote different meanings. In fact, sundry interpretations, meanings, and definitions have been offered. Some scholars have classified the term as complex and largely elusive. The elusive nature of the term arises from the different ways it has been used in varying circumstances:

> The concept of development is elusive. When a community is developing a piece of land, it thinks of development as using resources in whatever way will be must profitable to it. But when in current usage people talk about the development of a poor country or region, they are thinking mainly about the process by which the living standards of the people who live there are raised, and in most circumstances, this is quite a different notion. It is also much more complex and needs further discussion.[27]

In other words, its meaning (development) is difficult to describe. A rather satisfactory way of knowing the meaning of the word is to look at the context in which it is used. More so, the term can also be used to connote change or movement. In this sense we mean development as a change either to the right or left, or a forward or backward movement,

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[25] Thomas D. Weldon, *Kant's* Critique of Pure Reason (London: Oxford University Press, 1958), 150.

[26] Ibid., 151.

[27] Juliet Clifford and Garvin Osmond, *World Development Handbook* (London: Charles Knight and Co., 1971), 16.

which could be horizontal or vertical. However, from the perspective of this essay, we refer to the term as a change from a backward to a forward direction or state or an upward movement. The whole of this shift in position or state can be understood as progress. Thus, we take development here to mean progress and the context which it is applied is basically the human society, which includes change in social infrastructures, modernization, economic expansion or growth, realization of man's full potentials, good use of resources, etc. However, in order to avoid leaving the meaning of the term open, a few definitions relevant to the context of this essay will suffice.

The sense in which the term "development" is used in this work is largely related to social change, infrastructural and human development as well as economic welfare. The notion of the term "development," either tacitly or explicitly, had historically been interpreted or understood within the context of human affairs to connote a state of the human condition.[28] The notion of the term in the definition above simply reveals the goal of development. In other words, development is not an end in itself; rather, it is a means to an end which is geared towards human well-being. This is the reason why the World Bank sees development in terms of people's well-being and capacity-building or developing which would give rise to environmental or ecological control and establishing order in society. It is put thus: "development must be inclusive of future generations and the earth they will inherit. It must engage people, for without their participation, no strategy can succeed for long. This notion of development as well-being means that measures of development must include not just rates of growth, but the dispersion, composition, and sustainability of that growth."[29]

The transformation of society is relevant to the discussion of meaningful development. One of the indicators of meaningful development is the ability to provide desirable living conditions for humanity. In fact, development can be conceived from a subjective perspective, pending what desirable conditions are put in place in the transformation of society. Juliet and Garvin seem to elaborate on this view; "if we wish to judge whether a country is developing or not, we need to decide: (a) is it experiencing economic development, (b) what other changes-social, political, institutional, aesthetic, ethical-are taking place? To what extent are these changes desirable?"[30]

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[28] Adebayo Ninalowo, *On the Crisis of Underdevelopment* (Lagos: Prime Publications, 2007), 6.

[29] Ashok Dhareshwar, "A Mixed Development Record," in *The Quality of Growth*, ed. Bruce Ross-Larson, 1-25 (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), 2.

[30] Clifford and Osmond, 18.

In line with the goal of development which as we have established earlier has to do with the well-being of humanity, Vinod Thomas simply annotates this point in his conception of development when he asserts that "development has to do with people's well-being, quality of life, and natural environment. It needs to be inclusive, mindful of future generations and the earth they will inherit."[31] Furthermore, it should be pointed out that development is not just maximizing utility or profits as seen in the definition of economics or from the goal of macroeconomics:

> Rather development is fundamentally about regime change and about the search for an optimal growth path, or at least one that is superior to the existing allocation of resources and current efficiency levels. Further, development typically requires new institutional patterns and organizational structures necessary to support such a dynamic process of change.[32]

The United Nations Development Program seems to employ a more detailed definition. According to them, development is, "to lead a long and healthy life, to be knowledgeable, to have access to the resources needed for a decent standard of living and to be able to participate in the life of the community."[33] No doubt that this definition is focused on alleviating the poor social conditions of mankind. It is making man relevant to his community.

By and large, development is the progressive unfolding of the inner potentialities of a given reality. It is to de-envelop, that is, to bring out to light: existential, functional, and epistemic, what was enveloped, folded or hidden.[34] In this meaning of development, innate ideas become the bedrock for explaining concrete transformations that occur in society. In other words, innate ideas are the foundation that gives rise to the development experienced in the social re-engineering and revamping of society for the benefit or good of mankind. In the context above, the term "innate ideas" refers to ideas that are conceived in the mind or originate from the mind without being influenced or impacted by sensory experience. It is purely

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[31] Vinod Thomas, "Revisiting the Challenge of Development," in *Frontiers of Development Economics: The Future in Perspective*, eds. Gerald M. Meier and Joseph E. Stiglitz, 149-182 (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), 150.

[32] James M. Cypher and James L. Dietz, *The Process of Economic Development* (New York: Routledge, 2004), 17.

[33] UNDP: Human Development Reports, "What is Human Development?" accessed May 18, 2024, https://hdr.undp.org/about/human-development.

[34] Pantaleon Iroegbu, *Enwisdomization and African Philosophy*: *Two Selected Essays* (Owerri: International Universities Press, 1994), 81.

the mind's 'solo' activities, such as retrospection, reflection, thinking, cogitation, etc. These activities of the mind are not accompanied in any way by the senses. A typical example is Albert Einstein's laudable discoveries in physics, which was a product or outcome of pure abstract thought.

However, Iroegbu was meticulous in his philosophical reflection on the meaning of development. He contended strongly that development must be seen largely from the angle of the individual. It must include the full growth of the individual, as he puts it:

> The individual is involved in his fullness as an individual but an individual in community. Individuality involves selfhood and relationship. Both coordinates to make up the human person. Defined in his fullness, this human person is [...] a noema-noetic, psycho-somatic, psychosocial-physiological, socio-cultural, individual-rational and human divine integrated being. To talk of development is to talk of the human being progressing in these various aspects.[35]

George Ehusani is not far from following the definition above, when he discusses development froma dual perspective and characterizes it thus: (a) the maximal presence of human dignity and integrity, mutual love and justice, sociality and hospitality, responsibility and discipline, (b) the minimal presence (or desirable absence) of war, homicide, suicide, drug addiction, mental breakdown, oppression, and starvation.[36] In both views above, development must be seen as an integration and dynamic progression or upward motion in the moral, spiritual, and material well-being of the human person.

Man's physical and natural environment is not excluded in this integration. The integration of the various areas: pycho-personal development, the socio-cultural, the moral-religious, is important if the full meaning and complete demands of development are to be realized. It is only when the entire aspects, mentioned above are realized that development becomes authentic, meaningful, and holistic.

VII. A philosophical conceptualization of development

The meaning of the term "development" in the foregoing exercise is incomplete without delving into the basis upon which it is firmly grounded. In other words, great minds have well-articulated and represented

[35] Ibid.

[36] George Ehusani, *An Afro-Christian Vision: "Ọzọvẹhẹ!": Toward a More Humanized World* (New York: University Press of America, 1991), 224.

the term in their multifarious postulations, a term instrumental in the discussions of metaphysical principles and philosophical anthropology. In the history of philosophy, the meaning of development can be inferred from the works and thoughts of scholars such as Heraclitus, Aristotle, Hegel and Karl Marx, Ngwoke and Ugwu,[37] among others. These scholars see development as akin to change.

In fact, Heraclitus explains the meaning of development with the two terms "flux" and "logos." In substantiating this position, "Plato records Heraclitus' view that everything was motion."[38] It is from this, that we inferred the view of development that everything is in a state of constant change (transformation). For Aristotle, it was the theory of *hylemorphism*,[39] which is the theory of 'matter' and 'form.' Aristotle used both to illustrate the concept of change which constitutes the hub of development. Hegel's concept of development is hinged on his fundamental dialectics exemplified by the gradual acceleration of the Absolute in the manner of "thesis" "anti-thesis" and "synthesis."[40] Although Marx employed this method of Hegel, he departed from him in asserting the inevitability of change, not with regard to spirit, (Hegel's Absolute Spirit) but matter.

VIII. Kant's thought formation and its role in development

Our task here is to explain and lay a foundation for examining the phenomenon of development, using Kantian analysis of the human mind, which we have christened here as "transcendental ontology." What do we mean by 'transcendental ontology?' The word "ontology" has been employed both by Kant and Heidegger; "Kant as well as Heidegger is in agreement that ontology is the study or interrogation of the general structure of thought (i.e., transcendence) or what belongs to consciousness or human knowledge in general."[41] This meaning seems to suggest that ontology is akin to transcendence, which precisely is not improper. For Heidegger, "ontology" is the pure theory of Being, or the science of the Being of beings.[42]

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[37] Hilary C. Ngwoke and Anayochukwu K. Ugwu, "Promoting Innovation for Development through a Participatory-Based Pedagogy: The Freirean Model Considered," *Nnadiebube Journal of Education in Africa* 7, no. 1 (2022): 35-36.

[38] John Ferguson, "Notes on the Early Greek Philosophers," *Second Order: An African Journal of Philosophy* 3, no. 1 (1974): 39.

[39] Encyclopedia Britannica, "Hylomorphism," March 15, 2016, https://www.britannica.com/topic/hylomorphism.

[40] Jostein Gaarder, *Sophie's World: A Novel about the History of Philosophy*, trans. Paulette Moller (New York: Berkley Books 1996), 362.

[41] See Okoro, 211.

[42] Martin Heidegger, *An Introduction to Metaphysics*, trans. Ralph M. Manheim (London and

Ontology, originating from the Greek word for being, is a term from the 17th century that refers to the branch of metaphysics specifically dedicated to the study of existence. Hence Kant is referred to as the greatest opponent of the view that unaided reason can tell us in detail what kinds of things must exist.[43] 'Unaided reason' here, refers to knowledge that is not derived from the senses or supported by them. It is purely the mind's independent operations or activities that cognize knowledge. The process whereby the mind comes to such awareness of extra-empirical entities or realities is called transcendence. It is the mind's ability to go beyond the scope or limit of sense experience. Kant alluded to the term in his effort to combine empirical realism with transcendental idealism:

> In his (Kant's) attempts to combine empirical realism, preserving the ordinary independence and reality of objects of the world, with transcendental idealism, which allows that in some sense the objects have their ordinary properties (their causal powers, and their spatial and temporal position) only because our minds are structured that these are the categories we impose upon the manifold of experience.[44]

What Kant did in the *Critique of Pure Reason*, is to take the question of the foundation of experience seriously. He tries to find the foundation of experience itself, and any such inquiry he describes as transcendental.[45] Hence "transcendental [...] refers to the necessary conditions of our experience."[46] Besides this, Kant refers to the term in two major senses; 'transcendental aesthetic' and 'transcendental logic.' The former is an inquiry into possible *a priori* elements in sensibility ('aesthetic' being the Greek term for 'sensation'), the latter, an enquiry into possible *a priori* in thought ('logos' being the Greek term for 'concept')[47] that is, the mind's place in the phenomenon of development.

New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1959), 61-62.

[43] Simon Blackburn, *Oxford Dictionary of Philosophy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), 261.

[44] Ibid., 368.

[45] B. E. Oguah, "Transcendentalism, Kant's First Analysis and Time," *Second Order: An African Journal of Philosophy* 6, no. 1 (1977): 3.

[46] Alfred C. Ewing, *A Short Commentary on Kant's* Critique of Pure Reason (London: Methuen and Co., 1965), 25.

[47] William Henry Walsh, *Kant's Criticism of Metaphysics* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1975), 16.

Kant's analysis of the human mind and how it underpins development can be understood from the following three perspectives. First, Kant in the *Critique of Pure Reason* established or endorsed knowledge that is sensible as well as knowledge that is independent of the senses. As a way of correcting the misleading position of the empiricist that 'all our knowledge is derived from the senses,' "Kant here lays down his famous principle that all our knowledge begins with experience but does not all arise out of experience, i.e. there is no knowledge temporally before experience but it is not all either causally due to or logically based on experience."[48]

By implication, Kant here implicitly presented a defensible view of rational knowledge which he called *a priori,* independent of sense experience. The logical end of Kant's position here was an attempt to clear the skepticism around the possibility of both *a priori* and *a posteriori* knowledge (i.e., understanding and sensibility). Having established the reality of both forms of knowledge (*a priori* and *a posteriori*), he proceeded to evince the convergence (the meeting point) between the two seemingly incompatible theories of knowledge; empiricism and rationalism, by what he called the *synthetic a-priori.*

In both of these forms of knowledge, the mind is at the center. It is the nucleus or engine of the human configuration which makes the reality of empirical and rational knowledge possible. This centrality of the mind is underscored by the fact that the mind possesses certain *a priori* principles and forms. It is in this way that objects, both in the outer and the inner sense can be known. These *a priori* principles and forms are the intuition of time and space and the categories.

These metaphysical principles, according to Kant, make it possible for the mind to stamp its forms on objects in nature as well as to structure sensibility in the outer or phenomena world. The process is simply that the five senses receive data from experience. The mind, as a reaction to what is obtained through the senses, imposes its forms on objects received, thus structuring, and organizing experience. By this act of structuring and organizing experience, the role of the mind goes into creating a congenial ambient, a socio-cultural transformation which entails stability, equality, justice, and social steadiness in society.

One of the hallmarks of social development is the arrangement or harmonization of social utilities in such a way as to create aesthetic haven and pleasure for mankind. This is what informed the development of recreation and amusement centers. The order seen in specialized sys-

[48] Ewing, *A Short Commentary on Kant's* Critique of Pure Reason, 16.

tems and intricate inventions, such as the mechanism of a wristwatch, computer, machines, etc., is owed to the mind's inherent coordination of sense experience. Natural principles, in abstract form such as natural law; the idea of justice, equality, and natural rights – to mention a few which exist in nature – were intuited by the mind which then arranged or re-ordered and codified them into concrete laws. In this regard, social interaction and peaceful co-existence between individuals, nations, states, and countries is achieved. This has no doubt fostered social development.

Second, according to Kant, the mind possesses the capability to apprehend *a priori* realities, specifically referring to the mind's retrospective and reflexive awareness of its mental operations The mind is able to conceive and initiate ideas, concepts, and imaginations. Though these ideas are metaphysical entities, they are transformed into visible forms which in turn account for the development witnessed in our existential world hitherto. Unah clearly articulated this point in this manner:

> *Without these ideas, concepts, plans and projects generated by human reason, no* meaning can be assigned to the world, no mobilization and organization of experience would be possible. It is because of the metaphysical capacity of the mind to generate ideas and concepts, plans and projects that we are able to create systems of meaning and add value to the world.[49]

With regard to issues relating to development, it can be argued that the world with its advancements – in technology, engineering, arts, medicine, architecture, agriculture etc., and human institutions such as politics (national and international), government, empires, kingdoms, etc. – would not have witnessed unprecedented evolution without the mind's input. It can be said presumptuously that these inventions were never the hand-work of any divine but that of "[...] human beings that invented the idea of politics and political institutions."[50] It can be vehemently argued that these ideas, concepts, plans etc., were first *a priori* entities before they were translated into concrete forms. In this light, it is undeniable, that Kant's philosophical evolution has had a significant

[49] Jim I. Unah, *Metaphysics* (Akoka-Yaba: University of Lagos Press, 2010), 139.

[50] Fred Miller, "Aristotle's Political Theory," *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Fall 2022 Edition), eds. Edward N. Zalta and Uri Nodelman, https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/fall2022/entries/aristotle-politics/.

influence on nature. This was the view expressed by Schonfeld thus, "while traditional scholars largely dismiss his holistic ontology prior to the *Critique*, innovations in the environmental and physical sciences have validated Kant's claims as realistic insights in the workings of nature."[51]

Third, the *synthetic a priori* theory of Kant implicitly accounts for or takes the mind as the foundation of development. The mind at this level works on received data; let's say of a horse and a man. The mind then proceeds to imagine the possibility of a blend of these two, an object or creation which is partly human and partly animal, a centaur. This creation or imagination of the mind may not yet exist in the empirical world, but it already exists in the mind.

This is also a way of explaining or accounting for inventions and innovations in scientific and technological breakthroughs in the world. The mind first thinks up or conceives a possibility of something or an idea that has not yet existed. One way the mind achieves this is by drawing example or model from nature. Take for example the invention of the airplane ('a vehicle designed for air travel, which has wings and one or more engines'), the prototype is said to be inspired by observing a flying bird. Though it started as an idea conceived in the mind, these ideas soon crystallize into concrete realties, in the form of an airplane which we see today.

So, all other forms of inventions – train, vehicles, ship, motorcycle, electricity, bulb, computer, domestic machines, various forms of tools, etc. – started in like manner. In all, we say that the role of the mind is inexhaustible in the creation and re-creation of our world. What certainly brings illumination to the mind to initiate ideas, concepts, and remold them into material forms is the power of transcendence. As Okoro puts it:

> It is the power to institute transcendence that opens up new horizons or vistas of vision otherwise termed illumination. Illumination in turn unveils to us the hidden nature of assents as problems and the opening up of these hidden secrets of life implies new discoveries or inventions that help to revalidate and consolidate our knowledge of and control over nature. By so doing, we forge new concepts, demolish or surmount existent problems. It is the strict de-

[51] Martin Schönfeld and Michael Thompson, "Kant's Philosophical Development," *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Winter 2019 Edition), eds. Edward N. Zalta and Uri Nodelman, https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/sum2024/entries/kant-development/.

> votion, or the rigor, or discipline to remain consistent, to remain in focus, to be on course, on matters of universe demolition and reconstruction, that is, the motion towards self-realization and self-perfection otherwise termed development.[52]

Unah, reflecting on the concept of transcendence says that "transcendence itself is the act of forming relations; the act of forming notions of unity, notions of universality and notions of homogeneity. With these notions created by transcendence we are able to relate one thing to another, connect one experience to another to make them meaningful."[53] It is through all these essential ingredients of the mind (power of transcendence, the forms of intuitions and the categories of understanding) that development is accomplished in our social milieu. Thus, "the strived by man to sustain his environment remains therefore a mandatory ontological concern."[54]

IX. Kant's critique of traditional ontology and its implications

In his critique of traditional ontology, Kant made a distinction between transcendental and empirical use of concepts. "By means of the empirical use categories refer to objects which are given according to the forms of our sensibility. And the alleged transcendental use of concepts would entail a reference to things in themselves, i.e., to non-sensible objects."[55] The set of categories Kant talked about in the *Critique* cannot be applied to the *noumenon* but only to sensibility (phenomenon). The distinction pointed out by Kant is that while the *noumena* refer to things as they are in themselves, the *phenomena* are things as they appear to us. The latter is knowable, while the former is not. The clear implication this has on the mind's ability to conceive and originate ideas is that the mind unquestionably possesses an infinite capacity for creativity and innovation. The limited capability of the mind is reducible to sensibility, whereas it is limitless in the realm of transcendence – making the mind's imaginative ability/power infinite.

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[52] Okoro, 212.

[53] Unah, *Metaphysics*, 123.

[54] Wala Olajide, "Man and Environment: An Existential Appraisal," *Essence: An International Journal of Philosophy* 1, nos. 2-3 (1997): 18.

[55] Matias Orono, "Kant and the Objective, Logical and Transcendental Meaning of the Categories," *Estudos Kantianos, Marilia* 10, no. 1 (2022): 190.

X. Conclusion

From the foregoing, we have been able to explicate the conceptual framework of Kant's theory (ontology/transcendence), the origin of our thoughts or concepts formation, the constitution of the human mind, and establish its link to development. We have been able to establish that ideas and concepts, originating from the mind, are the essential pathways through which order and development, firmly take root in the existential world. Regardless of the order and development humans have been able to use their minds to initiate in their environment and existential space, the end must be the happiness and well-being of mankind. It is pertinent to affirm that the cultivation of values and morals in individuals plays a crucial role in fostering sustainable physical and ecological development in the tangible world.

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