

**KANT'S IDEA OF SPACE AND TIME IN RELATION TO AFRICAN  
NOTION OF REALITY: MAKING SENSE OUT OF A SENSELESS  
WORLD**

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**1. Introduction**

It is a truism that the idea of space and time are not only interesting epistemological modes of knowing about reality, but that they also provide basic tools for analysis, prediction and explanation of phenomena in the empirical and non-empirical sciences. Space and time, thus, form a natural bridge over an examination of common sense and rational basis of how knowledge is acquired about realities. Nevertheless, the fundamental basis and process from which the functionality of space and time could be ascertained or determined, and to what extent realities could be conceived to exist within and beyond space and time is highly probable and uncertain. It thus becomes very pertinent to delve into the epistemological foundation of Kant's idea of space and time in order to know how reality unfolds itself in different modes, categories, cultures, religious beliefs and so on. And since African culture has a peculiar way of perceiving reality that exists within space and time, our epistemological discourse would be to examine and analyze Kant's idea of space and time, (which serve as intuitive, internal and necessary conditions of knowing about reality) in relation to the modes of knowing in African thought. Again, it is aimed at projecting the ontological, metaphysical and epistemological conception of reality and how knowledge is acquired from the material and transcendental worlds. It also exposes Kant's idea of how knowledge is acquired within space and time and not beyond space and time. In juxtaposition, however, the work has proved that in African ontology, there is no limit to knowledge. Thus, both the noumenal and phenomenal worlds create room for acquiring human knowledge; that in African thought, knowledge about

reality is acquired both “within” and “beyond” the limits of space and time.

**2. Kant's Idea of Space and Time**

Kant made a strenuous effort to demonstrate how the human faculties of reason and the senses work hand-in-hand to produce human knowledge. Hence, Kant states that “all knowledge begin from experience, but do not necessarily end in experience”. Here, Kant tries to mediate between empiricism and rationalism as schools of epistemological inquiry. On the issue of how experience is convertible to material element and formal element of knowledge, Kant notes the human mind playing a vital role. Kant holds that perceptible mind and the knowing mind complement themselves in an active mode. In all experiences, the mind (active) makes objects conform to its demands for intelligibility or comprehension. Kant refers to those things that appear to us directly, that is the phenomenal world as opposed to the noumenal world, “the world of things-in-themselves” that does not have a direct but indirect contact with the mind through its categories. The mind for Kant is not passive but active, and through its categories conform itself to the manifestation of things as they appear to us, within space and time. Elaborating on the two concepts, Kant wished to prove that space and time are imposed upon experience by the perceiving and knowing minds respectively. Again, space and time, being the outer and inner states of mind respectively have a complementary force towards producing knowledge about things. In his effort to complement space and time, Kant explained that both space and time are a priori necessary conditions that are responsible for synthetic a priori knowledge. All that we ever experience are within space and time. Kant expressed this point further when he says that “space and time are empirically real and transcendently ideal” (80-83). They are empirically real because they are really found to occur everywhere in experience; though space and time are not empirical concepts in themselves. Again, space and time are transcendently ideal because from the point of view of their origin, they are mind- derivatives. Their ideality is the fact of their being contributive to experience by the active mind. And this ideality is transcendental because the contribution of mind to experience is not an out-come, which each particular mind deliberately chooses in the course of its experience, but a condition which all minds, by virtue of being minds, necessarily

impose upon every phase of their perceptual lives. Space, Kant added, is a form for all external experiences, and time is the form of all internal experiences. Here, the perceptible mind (outer mind) conforms itself to the objects of experience. The knowing mind, on the other hand, does not only conform to the material elements of the perceptible mind, but also coordinates such elements, thereby giving rise to the formal elements. The conformity of the perceiving mind to the objects of experience is the function of space. While the receptivity of the objects of experience as well as their logical relation is the work of the knowing mind which happens within time.

Furthermore, Kant observes that since time is the form of inner intuition while space is the form of outer intuition, it means that space and time are to be seen as two sources of knowledge, from which bodies of synthetic a priori knowledge can be derived. They are the pure forms of all our sensible intuitions. Kant, however, rejected and debunked the existence of absolute space and time because this will mean the existence of other co-eternal, infinite and self-subsistent things. Space and time, for Kant, are said to be absolutely real only as a condition for the existence of other more objectively real entities (81-82). This implies that the objects of space and time are derived from the phenomenal world. For him, it is only in the phenomenal world that we can perceive things as they appear to us directly which are also knowable in themselves. The noumenal world, on the other hand, remains unknowable and the reality found in it is beyond our knowing. Space and time, though not physical or empirical objects, are sensible intuitions which operate only within the empirical reality. They are not transcendental or absolute reality in themselves. However, transcendental logic, which serves as the science or relation between and among separate ideas in our minds, correlates or co-exists space and time as inter-dependent entities. Through transcendental logic, the human mind is able to relate something to something else within space and time. Logic thus relates one idea with another idea so as to produce knowledge. Thus, according to Kant, no knowledge about a thing exists in a vacuum, rather all knowledge exists within space and time. Therefore, space and time do not depend only on what is given through experience directly, but also what is given indirectly through experience. However, anything beyond experience, which exists outside of space and time, Kant holds that it is unknowable. This is where we have a point of demarcation between Kant's idea of space and time and that of African thought.

### **3. What is space? What is time?**

In Part 1 of his book called Critique of Pure Reason, Kant wrote the “transcendental aesthetics”, which contains information about the two forms of sensibility. These forms of sensibility, namely: Space and time, Kant described as correlations or co-existent entities. For him, time is the real form of inner intuition, while space is the real form of outer intuition (79). Time has subjective reality in respect to inner experience, just like space has subjective reality in respect to outer experience. While Kant believes that space and time relate to each other, he also states their respective conditions as described below:

- i. Space is not an empirical concept which is derivative from any experience. Rather, it is the outer mind in conformity with the objects of experience, which now gives rise to representations. The outer mind is the perceptible mind that grasps the material elements, which then directs such elements to the inner mind (time) to coordinate or arrange them as formal elements.
- ii. Space is a necessary a priori representation, which underlies all outer intuitions. This implies that there is no conception of an idea outside of space, because space is a necessary condition that precedes all external phenomena (that is, the physical manifestation of things that empirically exist outside of the mind). Also, the idea of “necessity” demands that there can be “no content without a space, but there can be space without content”. The content is a posteriori judgment that the mind interprets about the material elements.
- iii. Space is an infinite given magnitude, which is immutable. It is an a priori representation that helps in the understanding of self-evident truths or axioms. These self-truths or axioms are, for instance, found in the method of mathematics, especially in geometry.
- iv. Space is a pure form of sensible intuition. This refers to the power of the subjective mind as being capable of coordinating, conforming as well as arranging the material objects as it grasps them from the phenomenal world. This also applies to the faculty of the mind in respect to individual views, the capacity or

disposition of individual minds to perceive realities through their categories.

Similarly, Kant enumerates the following conditions of time.

These include:

- i. Time is not an empirical concept which has been derived from any experience. Rather, it is the activity of the inner mind, otherwise known as the knowing mind, which coordinates the elements given to it as element so as to produce knowledge about a thing. Hence, time is not a co-existence or succession that comes to us through perception, which limits us to think of time as a simultaneous or successive event.
- ii. Time is a necessary a priori representation, which underlies all inner intuitions. We cannot in respect to appearances in general, remove time itself, though we can quite well think of time as void of appearances. In it alone is actuality of appearances made possible. Appearances may one and all vanish; but time (as the universal condition of their possibility) cannot itself be removed. Also, the possibility of 'apodeitic' principle concerning the relations of time, or of axioms in general is also grounded upon this a priori necessity. Time has only one dimension; different times are not simultaneous, but successive just as different spaces are not successive but simultaneous.
- iii. The infinitude of time signifies nothing more than that every determinate magnitude of time is possible only through limitations of one single time that underlies it. That is, the original representation of time must not be given as unlimited.
- iv. Time is not a discursive, or what is called a general concept, but a pure form of sensible intuition. Different times are but parts of one and the same time; and the representation which can be given only through a single object is intuition. Moreover, the proposition that different times cannot be simultaneous is not to derive from a general concept. The proposition is synthetic, and cannot have its origin in concepts alone. It is immediately contained in the intuition and representation of time.

#### **4. African Conception of Reality**

The branch of philosophy that deals with the concept of reality is metaphysics. This is why it is defined as the philosophical outlook which tries to reach a more comprehensive, all embracing, totalistic view of reality and the examination of being in a generic sense. It also involves a synthesis of all experiences in order to achieve a coherent whole which gives a complete picture of reality. Thus, it is in line with this definition of metaphysics that the African conception of reality, which forms the basis of African metaphysics, is considered. This is done in order to see how African conception of reality fits into a coherent metaphysical framework. Thus, African metaphysics is the African way of conceiving, perceiving, interpreting and making meaning out of interactions among beings and reality in general. It includes the holistic conception of reality in its transcendental, noumenal or non-material form.

However, a group of philosophers known as empirical researchers (factualists) have argued that African conception of reality should be a matter of unanimous agreement among every individual African. They believe that the vastness of Africa is in such a way that what is applicable to one African region may not be applicable to another region since there are so many regions. But, from our ultimate analysis, one will understand that all cultures may observe the same facts, and that their basic assumptions, theories and standards with which they interpret such facts may be different. But differences of cultural philosophy depend on the difference of the basic assumptions, and theories about reality. Also, there may be resemblances or similarities between the philosophical doctrines of different cultures, but these similarities do not mean identity or sameness. In addition, it is an obvious fact that there are differences between and among individuals because of the uniqueness of every individual. Yet, since it is difficult to study each and everyone's conception of reality, the much we can do is to assume that a group of people sharing the same cultural affinity could perceive reality in the same way. That is why Anyanwu and Ruch assert that:

If the criterion of philosophy is that every member of that culture should know it, then the western philosophy does not exist. How many individuals in England know about the ideas of Hume, Berkeley, and Locke, now called the British philosophy? How many Germans know

about the ideas of Kant? Why then do the factualists think that African philosophy should be a matter of unanimous agreement among every individual African?... it can only be that they are ignorant of what the cultural philosophy of the African people means or else they are intellectually dishonest (80).

Therefore, we can deduce from the foregoing that although different African communities have their different ways of conceiving reality; Africans as a group of people can also have a common conception of reality. In this regard, C.B. Okolo in his definition of African philosophy articulates the subject matter of its study as being centered on the understanding of African conception of reality. He says "African philosophy is a path to a systematic and coherent discovery and disclosure of the African in his world of reality; it concerns itself with the history, tradition, custom etc., and the significance these have for him" (10-11). The definition opens up among other things in the epistemological and metaphysical foundation of the traditional African conception of reality. The issue of reality and how the Africans come to know this reality constitute the main focus in our philosophical discourse. This is why Anyanwu and Ruch say that the African epistemological question is: How do Africans know what they claim to know? What method does the mind follow in order to arrive at a trustworthy knowledge of reality? How do Africans grasp reality in the universe of human discourse and so on?

In attempt to answer these questions, it is worthy of note that the universe of discourse in the African conceptual scheme is a totality of beings, comprising of the creator and the creatures in a harmonious communal relationship. Thus, the African concept of the universe of discourse (i.e. wholeness of reality) is characterized by a unitary view. This unitary view is based on the fact that in the African conception of the universe there is no significant distinction to be drawn between visible things such as animals, trees, rivers etcetera, on the one hand, and the invisible existents like God, gods, spirits, minds, witches, on the other hand. They all form parts of one seamless whole. Commenting on this unitary ontology of the Africans, J.S. Mbiti reiterates that:

The spiritual world of African people is very densely populated with spiritual beings, spirits

and the living-dead (those who have died and still live in our memory)...The spiritual universe is in unity with the physical, and that these two intermingle and dovetail into each other so much that it is not easy, or even necessary, at times, to draw the distinction or separate them (75).

In this way, Mbiti buttresses the interconnectedness of realities in one holistic view. At the centre of beings (realities) is man; man is at the centre, reaching out to the highest being and to the lowest being. It is based on this view that Onunwa says that "humans are not seeing as rulers of creation but rather as central element of the system on which human impose a centripetal orientation" (52). Centripetal describes an object which is found in the centre, and is attracting every object to bend to it. It means then that man is at the centre, of which everything must turn towards him. It also means then that everything is meant for man and that is why for the Africans everything done must be in line with African personhood. Thus, the reality of humans which are physical and those of the gods, spirits and things beyond, which are transcendental, must complement each other. Such a unified whole of reality in African mind-set is inter-dependent. Okere's position on this stand captures our mind, when he wrote:

The visible and the invisible are perceived as one, interrelated, interacting systems where agency and causality form a gigantic net-work or reciprocities, which translate into several acts of what we call religion, worship, respect, sacrifice, divination, communion which mark the relations between spirits and ancestors on the one hand, and men, on the other hand(3).

Hence, the conception of the universe in the African set-up depicts the existence of reality as a whole, that is, the "community" of all existing things. The whole of reality includes all the particular things that are said to be and the origin or source of these particular things that are said to be.

Therefore, under the concept of reality as a whole in the African context is the view that that which does not exist and cannot exist is not and cannot be said to be real. Thus, Abanuka posits that there are the fundamental characteristics of reality as a whole. Reality as a whole for

him must be conceived as comprising all particular things which exist and the ultimate support or source of these particular things. Also, the unity of reality as a whole stems primarily from the fact that reality as a whole is opposed to nothingness (20-21). Abanuka further maintains that particular things are real and in as much as they are real, they are not repugnant to other particular things nor are they self-contradictory since they can exist. He also maintained that the reality of particular things must issue from a common source or an ultimate meaning of reality. That is why Abanuka pointed out that individual things have qualitative identity with the ultimate reality and with one another. This conception of reality as a whole points to the fact that reality is unitary in the African context and not monistic.

In understanding the African conception of reality, there are three intimately related cosmological areas which form the continuum of reality. These include: first, the sky where God, major divinities, and angels dwell, second, the earth where human beings, animals, natural resources, some devils and some physically observable realities abide and third, the underworld where the ancestors and some bad spirits live. Mbuy captures these realities of the world as “human,” “ancestors” and “God”. He reveals that it is only through these three-fold dimensions of realities that African existence can be captured intellectually and meaningfully through philosophy(9). This is because all African metaphysical speculations and articulations are expressed within the context of these realities, which constitute in a very special way, the African view of the universe and reality as a whole. From this an inference can be deduced that the ideal of the African culture and its world-views are co-existence with the strengthening of vital forces or vital relationships in the world, since the African cultural stand point deals with complementary qualities and aspects of reality. According to Mbiti;

Africans have their own ontology; but it is a religious ontology and to understand their religions, we must penetrate that ontology... I propose to divide it up into five categories. (1) God... (2) spirits being made up of super human beings and the spirits of men who died long ago (3) man including human beings who are alive and those about to be born (4) animals and plants or the remainder of

biological life. (5) phenomena and objects without biological life... This anthropocentric ontology is a complete unity or solidarity which nothing can break up or destroy. One mode of existence presupposes all the others (15-16).

These five categories all form part of the same reality. Their interconnectedness manifests in one whole. Abanuka confirms this position by saying that reality from a traditional point of view includes things that are material or nonmaterial, their connections, effects and ultimate support or source as they are given in the consciousness of the indigenous African when he or she experiences the universe (16-17). This presents African epistemological conception of realities. For Abanuka, these realities are viewed in three perspectives. First, one can consider reality as thinkable. Here, the emphasis is placed on reality as object of the mind. The human mind can grasp the real as qualitative identity of reality. Secondly, reality can be understood as describable or qualifiable. In other words, reality can be viewed as capable of being expressed; reality can be talked about. Here, reality is considered as the object of language. Thirdly, reality can be viewed as being space-bound, temporal and timeless, that is, within and outside the touch of time. In this regard, attention is focused on the object as existing in space and time or as timeless (24-25). Abanuka's position and those of other Africans like Gyekye, Edeh, Maurier...settled at least with a general opinion that no matter the dimension in which realities appear in African world-view, they interrelate or complement each other in a unified manner. This belief made Maurier to add that no matter the world in which realities exist, the fundamental thing about them is that they relate to each other (65). Hence, the complementary force or interaction between the material and spiritual realities is made possible due to the fact that every existent reality has spirit, what Tempels calls “vital force”, inhabiting in each and every reality, and thus yearning for each other. The idea of complementarity, according to Asouzu, “serves a missing link of reality in mutual love and understanding” (92). Asouzu is of the opinion that African conception of reality is based on relational understanding. In this context, the mind (being-in-control) relates events in different forms to form human knowledge.

For Ijiomah, reality in African world-view is cyclical (African Philosophy's Contribution..., 85). This is because the spiritual appears as

a physical reality and goes back to the spiritual world and the cycle continues. This means that the physical has an inbuilt spirituality and spiritual has an in-built physicality. This implies that for the Africans each reality, whether spiritual or physical, appears and disappears into and takes the nature of the opposite reality. With this phenomenal interpretation of realities, Ijiomah quotes Gyekye's position that "the Akan people believe that realities relate to themselves in a manner that gives rise to an interwoven or harmonious relation" (Some Epistemological Tools..., 77). Iroegbu captures this harmonious relation as being that of "internal relational law and dynamics" (287). Thus, the complementary force between and among realities in African thought involves a dovetailing of realities into one another. Ijiomah's view on the two harmonious worlds is understood in "the prayer life of the Igbo people". For him, in prayer (Ibochi) Igbos attempt, for example, to normalize the relationships among the three worlds. In one type of Ibochi, libations are made both to the living and to God through the ancestors. The act of libation attests to the people's firm belief in the presence of the invisible beings that are ready to have communion with the visible ones through the agency of the ancestors (77). This explains why the Africans conceive that there exists mutual love and understanding between and among realities. It is for this reason that Africans give sacrifices, pour libations, resort to charms and make music during worships and communal celebrations. All this is done for the sake of harmonizing between the physical and transcendental realities.

Edeh further explores this harmonious relationship in what he calls "Occultic phenomena". According to this belief, people of special invitation meet with spiritual agents for matters affecting their common interests. This brings out the idea of duality, not dualism, in African thought. As quoted by Ijiomah, Edeh's position follows that:

For the Africans, the world is dual in nature beyond and above the visible, tactile physical world, there is non-visible which envelops the former. It is simultaneously within and outside of the earth and sea (Some Epistemological Tools..., 77-78).

This is because all realities in African world-view exist in a dual and interrelated manner. The sensible are not wholly sensible, neither are the spiritual wholly spiritual. But there is a union between the physical and the spiritual. In other words, duality is used to express the

interconnectedness of the whole of reality and based on this Njoku asserts: ...In African thought, things, the cosmos, the realities of the world, supernatural beings are so much mingled with human realities to be looked upon from an objective and substantiality view point (78).

The dual nature of reality is intertwined, similar and interdependent, visible and invisible. It is also stretched out in space to compromise the sky and the earth signifying the spirit and the human world respectively. Again, duality or "twoness" view of things accounts for unity and tension manifested in the traditional African structure of "harmony" and "balance" in the universe. Furthermore, the Africans view that there are ontological relationship between God, divinities, spirits, ancestors, man, the unborn, animals, plants and material things, in such a way that all life-forces are in constant interaction in a hierarchical order. According to Anyanwu and Ruch, "the Africans believe that since everything is one, everything is in everything else"(93). No reality is so sacrosanct to exist in isolation and that it is only within the framework of complementary reflection that reality is meaningfully expressed, ascertained and grasped.

##### **5. Kant's Idea of Space and Time in Relation to African Conception of Reality.**

Leopold Senghor in comparing Africans and European's conceptions about realities argues that there is a unique African world view, focused on what he described as "being" and "life forces" ([www.usenghor-francophonie.org](http://www.usenghor-francophonie.org)). This is due to the fact that the two world-views of African and European, (the background of which Kant developed his philosophy), are not in any way the same. But for scholarly approach, an attempt could be made to examine and state clearly the meeting point between the two world-views, as well as their point of demarcation.

According to Kant, space and time are forms of sensibility or sensible intuitions. Africans, on the other hand, conceive space and time not only as the necessary qualities of every existing reality, but also consider them as the fields of possible action. For Kant, like the Africans, everything is in space and time. We too are in space and time. But unlike

Kant, the Africans conceive space and time to be in cyclical form than linear. Time is not measured in chronometers but with events and achievements. Also, space is the generality and totality of the universe and all that it contains. It extends beyond the spatiotemporal, physical world to embrace the transcendental world. It is the same way that Kant perceives space and time as not being dependent upon the empirical or physical world; though they are empirically real and transcendently ideal in nature. However, while Kant's conception of space and time appears to be forms of sensibility or sensible intuitions, the African conception of space and time are fields of action, as time is marked by events; space is an accumulation of life forces or forces of actions.

Kant's view of a priori form of sensible intuitions-space and time, and the African conception of reality as manifolds of the physical and spiritual, material and non-material present some elucidating facts; firstly, that things manifest themselves in different modes as reality unfolds itself; secondly, that what is real presents the very nature of a being which expresses itself within space and time. Hence, Kant's view that what is known must be in space and time, also presents the fact that the objects of knowing or what is being known must be reality manifesting itself either as physical or spiritual, material or nonmaterial entities. This is a characterization of African epistemology or ontology. Thus, for the Africans all that we know within space and time is not limited, but comprises of the totality of things or wholeness of reality. Therefore, just as it is generally upheld in the epistemological concept of reality, the Africans are of the view that knowledge is holistic. In line with this view, Ozumba points out that "knowledge is a co-existence with mutual and spiritual, seen and unseen, empirical and rationalistic, psychological and religious, to wit, it is all encompassing" (71). This refers to the point that knowledge is an integral union between beliefs whose truth we can justify and for those whose truth we can not justify, but for which, we can offer reasons that we believe in some sense to be true, justifiable and certain. Thus, when one claims to know something such as "P", he is not limited to P alone, but knows "not p. The idea of P and -P are not contradictory, but complementary in form.

In the words of Kant, space and time as a priori forms of sensibility or sensuous intuitions are components of the mind's operational activity; the mind itself is very active in its activity. It is never passive and through its operation, it grasps that which is being presented

to it through experience. Arguing along the same line, African conception of reality (as though being composite of physical and transcendental realities), is known only when the active mind acquires and apprehends ideas that are gathered from our experiences. In their explicit explanation of this fact, Anyanwu and Ruch maintain that:

African maintains that there can be no knowledge of reality if an individual detaches himself from it. Bear in mind that the African, a life-force, is not a passive spectator of the universe but an active participator of the life events. So, he operates with the logic of aesthetics, which holds that the whole is the real. Knowledge therefore comes from the co-operation of all human faculties and experiences. He sees, feels, imagines, reasons or thinks and intuits all at the same time. Only through this method does he claim to have the knowledge of the other. So, the method through which the African arrives at the trustworthy knowledge of reality (God, man, spirit, society, social facts...) is intuitive and personal experience (94).

The idea of the "real" is an expression of the "self" which is grasped through logical thinking. This idea introduces African logic of relation between and among realities. For the Africans, an individual is a true being that manifests the "real" self in both the transcendental and physical worlds. Space and time are sensible intuitions, which according to Kant, are components of the mind's operational activity. The mind through its operation grasps that which is being presented to it through experience. In African conception, reality is a composite of physical and transcendental worlds. Yet, it is the individual that is capable of knowing such worlds, not in a shallow or passive mind, but a mind that is active. The mind interprets what is given to it through experience or as being revealed to the mind through religion, myth and oral tradition. The idea here is that the human mind is so strong and active such that it is above the sensory manifestations. Kant, on his part, sees the mind in its active mode conforming to the objects that are being presented to it through experience. The mind transcends the bodily impressions or sensations, but within space and time whose modes of functioning are based on

sensible realities that are intuitively given to the mind's categories.

In contradistinction to this notion, the Africans in their conception of realities transcend and incorporate in their conceptual scheme of existing realities, not only sensible and empirical or experimental realities, but also extrasensory and supernatural realities. Hence, in the African conception of reality, the mind transcends the bodily impressions and sensations and involves the extrasensory and supra-empirical objects, that is, the immediate and mediate data of human experience.

African conception of reality, therefore, is that there is a dynamic process such that reality revolves around in a cyclic form. Realities for Africans are immutable; though constantly moving, but then introducing nothing new to itself. Kant also conceives of space and time as having a link with the objects of experience, yet not empirically real in themselves. In other words, things existing within space and time are not outside of what we experience, but not totally dependent on experience. Hence, whatever that is got through experience also has a link with the transcendental ideal. Space and time do not only have a link with the transcendental ideal, but also depend on empirical reality. Again, space and time correlate or co-exist as inter-dependent realities. Likewise, the transcendental and physical realities in African thought complement themselves such that one cannot be grasped without the other. Hence, in both Kant's sensibility forms and duality of reality in African thought there exists a complementary force. In this context, Asouzu arguing from African ontological perspective says, that in African worldview, nothing exists in isolation; no reality exists independently. Hence, there is a missing link between and among realities in mutual love and understanding (7-8). This is because there is an intermediary force between different realities within a complementary framework.

Furthermore, Kant's idea is that space is the form of all appearances of the external senses, that is, the subjective condition of sensibility. For him, all objects that are external to us are represented as being in space. Applying this in the African context, it can be ascertained that Africans conceive that the things we perceive directly can be interpreted, systematized and conceptualized from the vital forces that govern them. Therefore, for the Africans, realities are grasped, conceived and interpreted through the workings of our minds, and this goes in line with Kant's a priori forms of sensibility, understanding and reasoning

which are constructs of the mind's activity. With regard to this, Anyanwu and Ruch explained that:

When an African looks at a tree within the assumptions of his culture, he sees and imagines a life-force interacting with another life-force. He sees the colour of the object (tree), feels its beauty, imagines the life-force in it, and intuitively grasps the interrelationship between hierarchies of life forces (11-12)

Whereas space is, according to Kant, a priori formal condition of external appearances, time, on the other hand, is the form of the internal condition of the mind. Our psychical conditions, for example, are perceived in time as following one another (successively) or as happening at the same time (simultaneously). Time is the a priori formal condition of all appearances whatsoever. All representations, whether they have or have not external things as their objects, are determinations of the mind and thus belong to our internal state or condition. Hence, they must subject to the formal condition of inner sense or intuition, namely time. In the same way, Africans in their conception see realities as existing in time and progresses in change and motion. Even the idea of reincarnation, for example, being upheld by the Africans is a reality that occurs successively in a certain period in time and can be perceived by the mind. For the Africans, time is an event. Time designates different events that follow one another in a successive manner or simultaneously as the case may be, through which our psychical states can be perceived. For the Africans, everything that happens and everything that "is" exists in space and functions in accordance with time according to the operative functions and constructs of the mind. Thus, in African conception of reality, that is the reality of the immortality of the soul, reincarnation, the universe, principles of the real, personality and personhood, being, substance, causality, extra-sensory and so on, it is settled at least that they are products of the mind which are generated from our ordinary experiences of things around us.

Again, Kant reasoned that we can imagine one space only, and if we speak of many spaces, we mean parts only of one and the same space. The same is applicable to time; for different times are nothing but only one and the same time. In the same way, Africans conceive realities as particular individual entity existing in different spaces and times, which



may be in the subjective mind of different people perceiving reality. But collectively, reality can be considered to exist in the same but one space and one time that can form African conceptualization, systematization and harmonization of reality as a whole, and not as indivisible parts.

Furthermore, there is in African world-view a sense of order, harmony and continuity of experience, which in fact constitute African logic of relation between different realities. On the other hand, space and time for Kant is not a matter of temporality but a matter of order, harmony and continuity in experience. Space and time are limitless, eternal, fixed and unified, according to Kant. Thus, in both world-views, reality is unified and constantly fixed in line with Parmenides' philosophy that "nothing comes into existence and nothing goes out of existence". Whatever that is, simply is, and thus giving rise to objective truth about things. Our conclusion thus is reached that Kant's idea of space and time in relation to African conception of reality has an epistemological and ontological foundation which is built on the phenomenal world, but not in reference to the noumenal world. However, the point where Kant's position differs greatly from African ontology or Epistemology is where he did not believe that things in the noumenal world are in themselves knowable. Kant only believed that things in the phenomenal world are known in themselves, but the noumenal realities are not known in themselves. Africans on the other hand, believe that realities in both phenomenal and noumenal worlds are knowable, and could be known by direct or indirect experience of both worlds. In African context, we can grasp reality that is transcendental, beyond the phenomenal; the reality of absolute entities that is found in the noumenal world. Hence, African conception of reality differs here from Kant's idea of noumenal and phenomenal worlds existing within space and time. In African thought, the human mind grasps reality that exists within and beyond space and time. The human mind grasps reality that is found in the noumenal world, which is beyond space and time. This is where the peak of our work lies. Again, our point of demarcation that reality in noumenal world, which is an entity beyond space and time, is fully grasped, interpreted and systematized in African thought system, will remain senseless for the Kantians. But, for the Africans, there is a sense in our stand. The question now is: How do Africans perceive of reality in the noumenal world, which exists beyond space and time? How is reality that exists within and beyond space and time being grasped in African

thought? How do Africans relate to this world of reality within and beyond space and time? In other words, how do Africans make sense out of this senseless world?

The answers to the above questions would be fully grasped if we take our discussion back to African logic, which presupposes the foundation of African metaphysics or ontology. Our main task here will be to discuss the basis through which Africans relate, interpret and understand reality that exists beyond space and time, that is, the reality that is found in the noumenal, non-material or transcendental world. Within the framework of African logic, which is systematized on the unification principle and the three valued system, there is a possibility of different realities existing together as complement and not as contradictions. Through the unification principle and three-valued system in African logic, no reality exists independent of the other. In other words, no reality exists in isolation; hence, the realities of both the noumenal and phenomenal worlds are mutually inclusive such that none of them is so relevant, grasped or understood without the other. The reality of the noumenal world is knowable through our knowledge of the phenomenal world, and that the phenomenal world is meaningfully expressed due to its relation with the noumenal world, which serves as missing links. As such, the objects of knowledge, (which Kant classified as the phenomenal and noumenal worlds), in African thought system it is captured as the material and non-material, the physical and transcendental, the natural and supernatural (subnatural) worlds as being described by different African scholars. But, the objects of knowledge in African thought are grasped through the instrumentality of reason, the senses and revelation (faith). And in understanding the objects of knowledge, the knower uses the senses to access the material world directly and the instrument of reason to access the non-material, transcendental world of reality.

Hence, for Kant, the two instruments of knowledge that the knower uses can only enable him to access the phenomenal world. But, in African thought system the knower (subject) can use the instruments of reason and experience to access both the noumenal (non-material) and phenomenal (material) worlds. In other words, the noumenal world for Kant is not accessible, but in African context, the noumenal world, which is interpreted as the non-material, transcendental and subnatural world is accessible through the activity of the human mind, which uses reason as

its main instrument of penetrating any such reality. Thus, in order to grasp, understand or penetrate such realities in both worlds, an African believes that reason plays a vital role. Reason is considered the instrument in the conceptualization, systematization and harmonization of different forms of reality within and beyond space and time. Other instruments of acquiring knowledge, namely: the senses and revelation (faith) are also considered as being important in African epistemic justification of how knowledge is acquired. But in all, it is reason alone that is capable of penetrating the inner-most nature of reality, within and beyond the objects of experience; and those that are being revealed as transcendental reality. Reason, thus, gathers that which is given through experience directly and also seeks to explain that which is beyond experience, (that is, indirectly given or not given through experience), but which constitute the objects of knowing.

Therefore, in African thought system, the transcendental (noumenal) world is not perceived as an abstract, independent and unapproachable world of the divine forces, spirits or gods. It is the world that is being articulated by reason or thought; the place of reason in the acquisition of knowledge is important in the understanding of African science and logic. Thus, in African science and logic, the noumenal (transcendental) world is identified with reason or thought. But, this thought or reason in African ontology or religion becomes an attribute of revelation or faith, of which the human mind gives valid judgment of any data it presents. This shows that there is a direct link between the non-material world and the human mind, and it is actually the human mind through the instrumentality of reason that accesses and determines the nature or form of reality in the non-material world. For the Africans, the entities in the non-material, transcendental world are only accessible through the human mind and not through the senses, since they are limited. That is why African thought system has it that to think of reality that is beyond or above the human mind is impossible. As such, we can assign the material world to the senses and the non-material, transcendental or subnatural world to the human mind; that it is the human mind that uses its instrument called "reason" to determine, access or interpret what the senses perceive. In other worlds, reason as the instrument of the human mind plays dual role. First, to interpret what is given directly by the senses and second, the human mind uses reason to describe reality in non-material, transcendental world. The non-material

world is the world of thought, which held sway in African science and logic. That is to say, within the framework of African science and logic, the non-material (noumenal) world is grasped whenever reason has a direct contact with experience, and thus giving rise to "reasoned experience". But in African ontology and religion, the noumenal world is grasped through the complement of faith and reason, thereby giving rise to "reasoned faith".

Through "reasoned faith", the reality of the non-material (noumenal) world is intuitively grasped to give rational, meaningful judgment and interpretation of the phenomenal world. But through "reasoned experience", reality in the material (phenomenal) world is inferentially linked with the noumenal (non-material) world for the purpose of acquiring "reasoned" knowledge. While the former is a direct product of African religion or ontology, which is expressed in African modes of worship, prayer-life and sacrifices, the latter is an immediate product of African science and logic, which is built on a three-valued system and unification principle; a principle that is centered on African "harmonious" system or thought (see Ijiomah. C."An Excavation of African Logic"; Okeke. J. Outline of African Logic, forth-coming; Mamadu. T. "The Role of Logic in Scientific Methodology: An Integrativist Approach"). The latter position, which is based on "reasoned experience", is our main concern in this project than the former.

African science and logic, thus, which are derived from African thought system maintain their stand that where a reality unfolds itself, either direct or indirect through experience; where a reality is discovered and captured as being true or false, positive or negative, it cannot be reached conclusively that there is no other possible value or a neutral position that can be validly deduced. In other words, African thought has its three-valued and unification principle shown on the platform that the human through the instrumentality of reason grasps reality that are both transcendental (non-material) and materially given data of experience. Reason, in grasping that which is given directly or indirectly through experience, seeks to relate and interpret the existing link between and among different worlds' realities. The link or relationship is between the seen and unseen, material and non-material, physical and transcendental, natural and subnatural or supernatural realities, of which there is an intermediary force between them. The intermediary force, on its part

contains in itself both elements that are positive, negative and neutral or possible results in a harmonization. These three-valued elements do not exist as contradictories, but only as integrative elements where each of the elements contributes to the well-being of the other. It is in this sense that African conception of reality is wholistic, complete and unitary, where reason and experience must have an integral union in the course of interpreting the different worlds of reality, either as noumenal or phenomenal, transcendental or scientific, non-material or material, as earlier stated above. In this context, experience which is also known as sensation or perception (through the sense organs of sight, smell, touch, feeling and taste) grasps certain objects that are now sent to the human mind, whose main instrument of operation is reason, which now grasps them and gives judgment that constitutes human knowledge. Reason, in some instances, moves beyond that which is given through experience directly to have or grasp reality that is beyond the ordinary experience. Reason, upon its ratiocinative process, grasps and interprets that which is given as products of experience. It also delves into another possible world of reality, which cannot be given to it or experience directly, but without which there is no objective truth or knowledge about reality. At this juncture, it is important to note that the "other possible" world is a world of thought or reason, and thus, no reality is beyond or above the world of thought. On this level, reason or thought is capable of reaching to any form or nature of reality, but it all depends on the circumstance, time and situation in which reason or thought itself moves in search for such realities. Thus, "reasoned experience", if you may like to call it that way, draws the full meaning of reality that is beyond and above the physical manifestation. It holds a valid judgment or conclusion that behind the meaning of any form of reality, there is yet another meaning that goes beyond or above it. And to trace the originality of ideas or meaning of such a reality, it will eventually lead us in a continuous series of reality, but in a cyclic form. This is in line with our earlier position that in African thought reality exists in a cyclic form such that the transcendental is found revolving round the physical world and vice versa. To this end, the African thought holds its view that reality of both the noumenal and phenomenal worlds, as Kant would prefer to call, is not the abstract world of the spirits or gods that is out there, but it is the world of thought or reason (See Okeke, *Systems of African Science*, forth-coming). Hence, if the noumenal world or realities are not given in

experience, they are given in thought or reason. It is for this reason that the noumenal world of Kant (which is considered as being abstract, meaningless, without any content or form), is not seen as such in African thought. But, the "senseless" noumenal world of Kant is considered as meaningful, sensible and rational world in African thought; that any form of reality including God, the gods, spirits, forces and other higher or transcendental beings can be reached to, be related with and understood through the human thought or reason.

#### **6. Evaluation and Conclusion**

Kant's notion of space and time is built on the mind's ability to intuit sensible realities. For him, there can never be any object, whether of outer or inner sense, which is not in time. Hence, for him, empirical reality must necessarily be characterized by spatio-temporal relations.

Kant in all his contributions on the notion of space and time has made a great impact in the theory of knowledge and in knowledge acquisition. However, Kant did not agree that the possibility of knowledge includes both the empirical and transcendental, material and nonmaterial, seen and unseen realities which is typical of African thought.

Kant's view that if there are realities which cannot affect our senses and which cannot belong to empirical reality, they cannot be in space and time is contrary to the African conception of realities. This is because Africans perceive through the workings of the mind, empirical and supra-empirical realities and consider them to exist in space and time as a priori necessary conditions of sensuous intuition which complement each other. That is to say that in African conception, reality comprises of both the physical and transcendental, material and immaterial, visible and invisible beings in a harmonious system or complementary framework.

Equally, Kant's view that there is no reason to suppose that space and time apply to things-in-themselves, since for him they are phenomenal so to say, and cannot encroach into the noumenal world. This can be criticized based on the fact that knowing things as they are in themselves also involves phenomena and sensation which paves way to the noumena. This is exactly why Africans are of the view that although the physically perceptible level and the spiritually perceptible level are different levels of conceptualization, they are however regarded as real,

since for the Africans, the physical and the spiritual are interrelated and constitute the totality of reality as a whole.

In conclusion, there is no doubt that Kant's notion of space and time has remained helpful with regard to our conception and understanding of realities, since they serve as the fundamental frames of reference through which objects of knowledge acquisition are grasped and apprehended. All objects of perception according to Kant are necessarily located within space and time. In African conception of reality, however, a conclusion is reached that every reality whether physical or spiritual is believed to exist and can be known through the mind's activity in its perceptible nature. This is precisely where the African conception of reality truly differs from Kant's notion of space and time, which anchor only on sensuous intuitions, sensible and physical realities. Thus, while Kant limits the inquiry into the notion of space and time, in connection with realities, to sensibility, understanding and reasoning, Africans go beyond that to employ extra-sensory, supra-empirical and extra-ratiocinative means in the conception of realities

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