

A Comparative Study of Mind-matter Dualism between Kant and Descartes

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Abstract. Descartes, one of the founders of modern European philosophy, established the basic idea of modern philosophy. He and Kant, a master of modern philosophy, deeply influenced the development of modern Western philosophy. Kant and Descartes reached a consensus on the dualism of mind and matter at the empirical level, that is, the dualism of empirical entity and the monism of transcendental noumenon, but they have their own views on the "knowable" and "unknowable" of transcendental noumenon.

Keywords: Kant; Descartes; Dualism of Mind and Matter.

1. Introduction

Descartes, on a basis of universal doubt, looked for the self-evident and unquestionable first principle as the starting point of philosophy, identified "cogito" as the logical basis of all knowledge, and distinguished the mind from the object. According to Descartes, the mind is the thought entity and the object is the extended entity while the sense experience serves as the link between them. The mind understands the sense concept of the mind and indirectly perceives the external things through the sense experience. This reveals the problem of the mind-matter dualism, that the sense experience and knowledge are in the mind, while the object of cognition is outside the mind, thus resulting in the separation of "thought" and "being" [1]. If ancient philosophy is based on objectivity, and modern philosophy, beginning with Descartes, emphasizes subjectivity, then dualism implies that philosophy is in irreconcilable contradiction between, on the one hand, "cogito" being the logical prerequisite of all knowledge, and, on the other hand, knowledge in the mind and objects out of the mind. Kant established his own claim based on Descartes' dualism. While Descartes argues for a typical dualism of mind and matter, with "cogito" referring to the existence of man as a subject and "God" remaining in the middle position, Kant excluded "God" from the necessity of nature and placed it in the unknown transcendental world. Therefore, the difference between Kantian and Cartesian empirical mind-matter dualism lies in agnosticism and knowability.

2. Entity Dualism and Ontology Monism

Descartes, as a dualist in the history of philosophy, implies a crucial contradiction that can be divided into idealist metaphysics and materialist physics, the former mainly in the Meditations of the First Philosophy and the latter as the core spirit of the Principles of Philosophy. "I think, therefore I am" is the first principle of Descartes' philosophy. It is the cornerstone and starting point of Descartes' construction of the knowledge system, clearly identifying the self as a thought entity [2], and distinguishing soul and body as two separated and independent entities.

This entity dualism leads to a crucial question: What is the relationship between Descartes' "entity" and Kant's "entity" and "noumenon"? Kant believes that "entity" belongs to a transcendental category, which is an object used to organize perceptual material norms into empirical knowledge, and the corresponding transcendental category is the attribute, which is attached to the entity, so as to realize the empirical judgment and empirical knowledge that "an entity has a certain attribute". However, empirical judgment can only describe the world regulated by a priori category, but cannot describe the noumenon, while "noumenon" is the "thing in itself", one that is not regulated and is unknowable and indescribable, and the entity has certain properties and is knowable. However, while the in-itself

has gone beyond the knowledge of empirical knowledge, it has not gone beyond the knowledge of human reason, as Kant put it: "The pure category, separated from the chaos of all perceptual stipulations, can guide reason beyond all experience to extend the application of the category to the in-itself." In this sense, the in-itself as noumenon is a transcendental idea, not an empirical entity. [3] According to Kant's distinction between "noumenon" and "entity", the "entity" expressed by Descartes can be either an empirical entity or a transcendental noumenon. He believes that both mind and body are empirical entities, since both have certain properties, such as the extensive properties of the body and the properties of the mind, etc. From this point of view, Descartes's dualism is one of entities at the empirical level. In addition, it's important for Descartes to doubt everything, and sometimes he also questions the extensiveness of the matter: what is extensiveness? Is it knowable? At this time, Descartes even excluded the universality of material objects, leaving only an "entity" that could not be felt and could only be understood by reason, namely Kant's so-called "noumenon". Similarly, Descartes questioned the existence of the subject self, and the thinking attributes of the "I", when the "I" became the "noumenon" without any attributes, and thus became a transcendental idea beyond the empirical entity.

3. A Comparison of the Dualism of Mind and Matter between Kant and Descartes

The mind-matter dualism of both Kant and Descartes belongs to empirical realism and forms a consensus on mind-matter dualism at the empirical level and advocates ontological monism, but there are differences between knowability and agnosticism in the transcendental ontology [4]. Thus, Kant classifies Descartes as the existence of transcendental realism, and places himself under the existence of transcendental idealism, and similarly classifies Descartes as the existence of experiential idealism, and places himself under the existence of experiential realism. It should be noted that Kant and Descartes are opposed to each other on both the experiential and a priori levels.

Kant defined the concepts of transcendental realism, transcendental ideology, empirical ideology and empirical realism as follows: the so-called transcendental idealism is that all phenomena are no longer regarded as in-itself, but as mere appearances, so that time and space are no longer the only rules or conditions formulated by the objects considered as in-itself, but perceptual forms of human intuition. In contrast, transcendental realism holds that time and space are independent of one's sensibility. Therefore, transcendental realism holds that the external representation of the reality that one is aware of exists independently of one's sensibility. Both transcendental realism and transcendental idealism are related to transcendental noumenon. In Kant's view, transcendental noumenon is the in-itself, but if the in-itself is only regarded as an idea of thinking being, without giving it attributes such as space and time, it is transcendental idealism. On the contrary, if the in-itself is endowed with the properties of time and space, and turned into an entity that can be perceived, it is transcendental realism [5].

Transcendental noumenon is also the main difference between the dualism of Kant and Descartes. It should be noted that Kant first distinguished "transcendental noumenon" from "empirical entity", before Descartes did not make a clear expression of "transcendental noumenon". However, in Descartes' relevant discourse, there is a certain ambiguity in the concept of "entity", which implies a distinction between the two concepts of "empirical entity" and "transcendental noumenon". Descartes gave the following explanation of "entity": any kind of thing that is the subject of something else and is contained in it, or is the characteristic, essence, attribute of the idea of some real existence that we understand and know, is the entity. In short, by "substance", we mean what we feel, or what exists in our conception as an objective existence. Descartes believed that the so-called "substance" does not refer to the thing itself with real properties, but to the carrier attached to the real properties of "nothing" but "being" [6]. Thus, it can be perceived that Descartes believes that "substance" is obtained through thinking reasoning, rather than perceived by people, which is contrary to Kant's view of "non-inferential, but directly perceived reality", but it coincides with Kant's so-called "transcendental theory of ideas". On the other hand, Descartes also believed that "entities" in experience have real properties, which is consistent with Kant's "empirical realism". Although Descartes' method of expression is not the same as Kant's, the philosophical views held by them are

much the same, that is, transcendental idealism and empirical realism. Therefore, it was unfair for Kant to classify Descartes as "transcendental realism" or "empirical ideology" and regard the two philosophical views as opposed to each other.

The ambiguity of Descartes' statement also causes Kant's misunderstanding. Descartes believed that the mind and the object are two different entities, and described the "entity" as one with even death and extinction, and sometimes called it an immortal entity without even. As far as objects are concerned, entities with dual properties, including form, volume, limbs, etc., can be broken down and destroyed; Entities that do not have parity are only attached to things in them, and cannot be separated and destroyed. For the mind, the entity of parity is "what is realized", "what is desired", "what is felt", etc., which can be changed, eliminated, and therefore broken down and destroyed; The non-dual entity, the existence of an understanding, desire, or feeling that can be cancelled, is a simple entity that cannot be separated and destroyed. Thus, the entity with parity belongs to the entity in experience, while the material entity in external experience and internal experience has different parity. For example, the object has extensiveness, but cannot think; the mind does not have extensiveness, but can think, etc. This is the dualism of empirical entity, meaning that the material and the mental entity belong to two different entities. On the contrary, an entity without its evenness cannot be experienced, but is only a transcendental idea, which has no evenness and is therefore indistinguishable. It is possible to regard material and mental entities as the same kind of "simple entity", that is, transcendental ontological monism. However, Descartes often confuses the experiential subject with the transcendental subject. He focuses his attention on the transcendental noumenon (the non-dual mental entity), but neglects the dual mental entity, highlighting the inseparability and destructiveness of the mental entity. Descartes also focused his attention on the experiential entity (even material entity), ignored the non-dual material entity, and emphasized its separability and destructiveness, thus forming the dualism of mind and matter. This mind-matter dualism, which is not experience and a priori, but a combination of experience and a priori, led Kant to believe that Descartes attributed the nature of experience to a transcendental noumenon [7].

Through the previous analysis, it is clear that Kant and Descartes have formed a consensus on the empirical level, meaning entity dualism, and both of them agree to the empirically knowable theory. On the transcendental level, the two main stations hold both similar and different points: they both advocate ontological monism, that the subject and the object are "thinking beings"; but Descartes sees the thinking being as the knowable self, whereas Kant sees it as the unknowable in-itself. Thus, the fundamental difference between Kant and Descartes lies in the knowability and unknowability of "transcendental noumenon".

4. Closing Remarks

To sum up, by sorting out the unclear expression of Cartesian entity theory and explaining its connection with Kant's ontology and ontology, it is clear that both Kant and Descartes advocate the dualism of empirical entity and the monism of a priori ontology, but their differences lie in knowability and agnosticism. In short, Kant and Descartes are not opposed to each other in philosophy. On the contrary, they complement each other and jointly build the basic framework of modern philosophy, which is the dualism of empirical entity and the monism of transcendental ontology.

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