Space & Time: Kant & Strawson

Strawson's interpretation of the concept of our Spatio-temporal framework importantly differs from that of Kant’s:

1. In *Critique of Pure Reason* Kant raises two questions about space and time. He says, 'Are they (space and time) only determinations or relations of things, yet as such would belong to things even if they were not intuited? Or are space and time such that they belong only to the form of intuition, and therefore to the subjective constitution of our mind, apart from which they could not be ascribed to anything whatsoever?

He, then, by his metaphysical and transcendental exposition of the concept of space and time, proves that they are not relations of things, but are two pure forms of sensible intuition. Kant gives therefore affirmative answer to the second question and negative to the first.

It is interesting that Strawson opposes this view of Kant in his *Individuals* and says that space and time can be explained in terms of the relations of things which, possess material bodies, or are basic from the point of view of identification.

2. According to Kant space and time are necessary a priori representations. We can not think of their absence, but we can think of them containing no objects at all.

Contrary to this view of Kant, Strawson holds that objects are inherently spatio-temporal; so we cannot think of empty space ad time. He says that identification of things depends on the identification of space (place) and time, and identification of place and time also depends on the identification of things. This dependence is mutual and not mysterious. One might say that 'there is, rather, a complex and intricate interplay between the two'.

3. If the Kantian ideas of the space and time are entertained as a priori forms in our sensibility, our actual world made up of identifiable and re-identifiable particular things would be reduced to a world of appearances which is different from the world in itself. We could know nothing of the objects of the world in itself.

*Strawson discarded this Kantian view of the world; and offers a descriptive metaphysical view of the spatio-temporal framework or world in which material bodies are admitted as basic particulars.*

Strawson's view of the concept of the spatio-temporal framework seems to be systematic and acceptable for the following reasons:

1. He explains the particular things and the spatio-temporal framework in terms of their necessary relation. According to him, one can not be thought of in abstraction from the
other. In Kantian scheme the relation is loose, in the end rather that was not maintained at all.

2. We may say that Kant's things 'when they are considered in themselves through reason, that is, without regard to the constitution of our sensibility', are non-spatial and non-temporal; but Strawson's basic particulars which may be called real things or things in themselves, are inherently spatial and temporal.

3. As far as Kant's view is concerned, the relation between things of our outer experience and space and time is occasional, but Strawson says that the said relation is not occasional and adventitious. According to him, every identifiable particular must have its place in space and time; only we can have knowledge of the particulars which are empirically encounterable or bound up with space and time.

4. In Strawson's descriptive metaphysical scheme the character of the spatio-temporal framework must be as fundamental as the character of the major categories of particular objects. Therefore the relation between them is symmetrical from the point of view of identification. Kant obviously precluded such type of mutual relation between them.