Questions and problems left by Kant to think about the contemporary crisis of Human rationality: a reflexive organization of themes involving the legitimacy of Reason

Questões e problemas deixados por Kant para pensar a crise contemporânea da racionalidade humana: uma organização reflexiva de temas envolvendo a legitimidade da Razão

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Abstract: Digressing through the first chapters on Kant's insufficient answer to skepticism without appealing to categories working as an inferentialist circular foundation, which manifests itself in the human practice of giving and demanding reasons (compatible with the recent pragmatist deontic scorekeeping model for successful assertions), we have prepared this article as a preamble to describe some open questions about human rationality and its crisis. In the latter chapter, we present the aporias related to the human self-image that is historically inserted in the context of mutual scorekeeping, our ability to represent solutions to problems of consensus and reforms for paradigms of social communication, as well as to become conscious of the categorical parameters that underlie the access to the truth (successful assertion). This article engages in a polemic with no pretension to answer it. It tries to compile the questions and aporias left by this reading tradition started by Kant.

Keywords: Kant; categories; reason; pragmatism.

Resumo: Percorrendo os primeiros capítulos com uma digressão sobre a resposta insuficiente de Kant ao ceticismo sem apelar para categorias que funcionam como uma base inferencialista circular, que se manifesta na prática humana de dar e exigir razões (compatível com o recente modelo pragmatista de pontuações deônticas para asserções bem-sucedidas), este artigo prepara um preâmbulo para descrever algumas questões em aberto sobre a racionalidade humana e suas crises. No último capítulo, apresentamos as

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VOLLET, Lucas Ribeiro

Questions and problems left by Kant to think about the contemporary crisis of Human rationality: a reflexive organization of themes involving the legitimacy of Reason

aporias relacionadas à autoimagem humana que está historicamente inserida nos contextos de jogo (mutual scorekeeping), nossa capacidade de representar soluções para problemas de consenso e reformas para paradigmas de comunicação social, bem como de nos tornarmos conscientes dos parâmetros categóricos que fundamentam o acesso à verdade (asserção bem-sucedida). Este artigo se engaja em uma polêmica sem pretensão de respondê-la. Procura compilar as questões e aporias deixadas por essa tradição de leitura iniciada por Kant.

Palavras-chave: Kant; categorias; razão; pragmatismo.

The institutionalization of the Reason's claims of legitimacy

Much of the Transcendental Deduction (KrV)[2]. the text in which Kant promises to address the question as to how concepts codify the agreement between intuition and pure concepts, or to demonstrate that the "subjective conditions of thought should have objective validity"[3] , follows an orientation with non-accidental kinship with Locke's physiology of understanding.[4] To demonstrate that the coding principles rest "within the concept of possible experience" or "consists of elements of a possible experience"[5], the German philosopher describes different mental faculties. He describes different models of association and connection, and one can even identify different stages of idealization in the unity functions provided by categories. The Lockean element of this type of strategy is hard to hide. Kant's advice that "we must first assess not the empirical but the transcendental constitution of the subjective sources"[6] does little to hide it if nothing else is added. For some physiology of the origins of cognition remains on the agenda, and the nature of the proof is not substantially altered. If we are not encouraged to look elsewhere for the sake of the argument, it is only understandable that we should see in Kant the same defects found in empiricist psychologism.

Before we can tackle this question, though, it is undeniable, and we cannot ignore it after hundreds of years of interpretation of the Kantian text, that the author inspired an anti-psychologist line of orientation. The legitimation of empirical knowledge by the

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[2] KrV = KANT, Immanuel. Critique *of Pure Reason*. Translated and edited by Paul Guyer and Allen W. Wood. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997.
[3] KrV A89/B122.
[4] KrV viii.
[5] KrV A 95.
[6] KrV A 98.

Revista Enunciação. Seropédica, v. 8, nº 1, 2023
ISSN 2526-110X

85

VOLLET, Lucas Ribeiro

Questions and problems left by Kant to think about the contemporary crisis of Human rationality: a reflexive organization of themes involving the legitimacy of Reason

institution of categories contributes to the strengthening of the rational claim of our judgments. This part of his demonstrative strategy is inseparable from his analogies with legal terminology. Still, in Deduction A, Kant sets out to connect his thesis, so to speak psychological – insofar as it portrays the behavior of human consciousness – and the ability to follow rules: "All cognition requires a concept, however obscure it may be; but as far as its form is concerned the latter is always something general that can serve as a rule".[7]

The reasoning above represents the general format of a strategy that would become a persuasive argument in Kant's Deduction of Categories and the Refutation of Idealism, the how-possible question, which we will call the circular argument. In the final moments of Deduction B, the author states that a priori conceptions of the connection between representations cannot go beyond the conditions in which objects are given in experience (B 166), thus demonstrating a certain circularity similar to that observed in Menon's slave, in Plato's work, who was led to solving a mathematical problem because he could "remember" the innate conditions in which the problem arises. But this circularity works in the other direction as well. For him, without this ability to represent *a priori* the conditions of representations, they would not be given as an experience, or they would not materialize in a conscious experience. The author presents the "conditions of thinking in a possible experience"[8] , as the condition of possibilities of objects of experience. In A 112, the author exposes this strategy stating that if the concept of cause is not used as a rule of conceptual synthesis for the manifold of representation, "these would then belong to no experience".

Now it seems less exotic to say that if we are aware of a stream of representations, we can represent as a higher-level knowledge (subsuming lower-level rules) some constraints intrinsic to that stream. Furthermore, this second cognition has theoretical ways of being represented: for example, by counterfactual inference about what would follow if an effect did not have that cause. The theoretical representation of a counterfactual condition has a set of intuitive possibilities for being confirmed or at least better supported. There is a stage however where the intuitive representation fails: no proof can be given. The speculation is void. To encode it as a possible object is impossible. This stage coincides with that where experience is impossible. The impossibility is not logical, but

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[7] KrV A 106.
[8] KrV A 111.

Revista Enunciação. Seropédica, v. 8, nº 1, 2023
ISSN 2526-110X

86

VOLLET, Lucas Ribeiro

Questions and problems left by Kant to think about the contemporary crisis of Human rationality: a reflexive organization of themes involving the legitimacy of Reason

transcendental. The transcendental character mixes the psychological and metaphysical condition since metaphysical concepts such as that there are no effects without causes would coincide with the failure to represent an effect without a cause.

The philosopher ties the psychologist to a circular condition. If by examining our mind stream, we can successfully describe sequences and associations of representations as such, we need to have access to these associations and sequences from a conceptual perspective, or what we will call – for purely pedagogical purposes – a *super-perspective*. Thus, we are *conceiving* the conditions of representation that make the experience itself possible. It will become clearer what is said when we look at the argument from B 141, where Kant links the unity of apperception with the logical form of judgment.

The possibility of creating higher-order alternatives to describe conditions of empirical actuality as if they were different, attests to our ability to give an objective value to the difference between subjective mental sequences[9] . The previously mentioned super-perspective is nothing more than the ability to describe any sequences and associations through the "is" in a judgment. The proxy object of subjective induction is modeled as a super-object or the ideal object of a super-perspective. Thus, the sequence described by the empirical script of the itinerary of a bus that I take every day can be described by an ideal value, which is the value generalized by all possible intuitive instances of "...is the itinerary of the bus that I take every day".

Within analytic philosophy, Peter Strawson was responsible for rescuing a sense in which Kant's theory of the pure categories of understanding remained relevant without even answering the skeptic, "detaching them [the major insights of Kant's work] from those parts of the total doctrine that, if they had any substantial import at all, I took to be at best false, at worse mysterious to the point of being barely comprehensible"[10] . Kant's original project and the Idealist thesis that our knowledge does not reach objects in themselves are set aside as part of an outdated doctrinal rubble, and another thesis arises as central: the thesis, more modest and plausible, that our knowledge of objects is mediated by rules that underlie the

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[9] For an assessment of Kant's theory as a modal conception that avoids both Aristotle's essentialist realism and Hume's anti-realism or inductivism, see Chignell, A. (2009), and Baldwin (2002).

[10] STRAWSON, in: HAHN, L.E., ed. *The Philosophy of P.F. Strawson*, *The Library of Living Philosophers, xxvi*. Peru, Ill.: Open Court. 1998, p. 8-9.

Revista Enunciação. Seropédica, v. 8, nº 1, 2023
ISSN 2526-110X

87

VOLLET, Lucas Ribeiro

Questions and problems left by Kant to think about the contemporary crisis of Human rationality: a reflexive
organization of themes involving the legitimacy of Reason

mapping strategies that connect our concepts to their possible instances (following the logical technologies created by Frege - 1892 - and the pioneers of modern semantics). At that point, Kant would say apperceptive representations – such as the representation of "I think" – are already conceived as the condition of the possibility of the codification of the agreement between object and concept. The semantic mapping is only possible because that condition is represented by the apperceptive concept.

We came back from this tour empty-handed. It does not seem that Kant succeeds, as he hoped, in his connection between the ability to follow rules and the postulate of an ideal or transcendental limitation on our psychologic representative behavior. The Transcendental Deduction argument, in this reading, proves something, but far less than is necessary to answer the skeptic. He only proves that some of our idealizations of psychological states, those idealizations that are similar to metaphysical concepts, coincide with some paradigmatic parameters of reasoning about the "impossible" – some empirical way of reasoning about the impossible, like some counterfactual inferences. This is far less than what is needed to answer the skeptic. Rigorous skepticism will doubt that this version of what is possible is the only one. Competing frames for thinking on the possible are not excluded.

When we say that Kant had a direct influence on anti-psychologist orientations, we are at least justified in assuming that his philosophy surpassed psychologism. It does so, though, using circular rhetoric. What remains controversial is something else. How does this circular rhetoric strengthen or institutionalize the rational legitimacy of our judgments? That said, what option does Kant give to institutionalize the legitimacy of the rational claims of empirical science? This polemic invites philosophy to renew skepticism, even without psychologism. Now skepticism is aimed at the suspicious role of pure reason in its meta-philosophical self-legitimation. We mean the famous circularity of conscious legitimation, which has been one of the dominant themes from the German tradition of idealism. We can count on Fitche as one of the founders of this circular way of thinking: "an act of thinking and its object are simply two different ways of looking at one and the same thing."[11] Insofar as we become aware of the representation of the ground and the

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[11] FITCHE, Johann Gottlieb. *Foundations of Transcendental Philosophy* (Wissenschaftslehre Nova Methodo (1796/99), ed. and trans. Daniel Breazeale. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1992, p. 376.

Revista Enunciação. Seropédica, v. 8, nº 1, 2023
ISSN 2526-110X

88

VOLLET, Lucas Ribeiro

Questions and problems left by Kant to think about the contemporary crisis of Human rationality: a reflexive organization of themes involving the legitimacy of Reason

clarity of our reasoning only after our judgment strategies can be conceptually described, it seems plausible to suppose that we cannot even operate associations, produce imaginary connections, or other psychological acts without at least exposing them as cognitive units, as the self-consciousness of the knowing process. This brings us to an impasse, because the universe of scientific propositions and cultural paradigms that becomes institutionalized, through language and other forms of self-conscious mediation, ends up becoming the official a priori condition of our knowledge – raising the new skeptical question of whether this meta-philosophical condition is nothing more than a sociological reification or anthropological construct.

Circular justifications invite problematic issues, often linked to the power of social dynamics that underlie the retroactive repercussion between choosing an institution and the security it generates to make it easier to be chosen (plus how hard it makes to choose an alternative). A popular expression, "comfort zone", characterizes the way in which the security generated by an institutional system block attempts to improve it or even discuss it, causing its normative functioning to be confused with rationality. Political struggles over the legitimacy of legal systems can offer an interesting analogy to describe the fragility of Kantian rhetoric. If the rules and methods used to stabilize the conditions of judgment and discernment between the truth and the falsehood of propositions are "institutions", we are at the risk of accepting the intellectual and cognitive results of these methods as an unquestionable *status quo*.

Circularity and Legitimacy

If the accusation to Kant is indeed correct, and he failed to rise above the circularity of reason's self-justification in his response to Hume, our success in distinguishing possible truth is nothing but the success in building a comfort zone for stable and organized representations.

In another line of reading, Kant's success against the skeptic depends on lowering the bar that gives the parameter of judgment: his conception of rationality is less ambitious

Revista Enunciação. Seropédica, v. 8, nº 1, 2023
ISSN 2526-110X

89

VOLLET, Lucas Ribeiro

Questions and problems left by Kant to think about the contemporary crisis of Human rationality: a reflexive organization of themes involving the legitimacy of Reason

than the metaphysical one and, therefore, requires less effort to be defended against the skeptic. This strategy is not far from cheating, for many. It is something like the inverse strawman fallacy: weakening not the opponents, but his position, in order to make it less ambitious and easier to be accepted. In addition to getting the easy road through a more elastic line of strategy, this course also suffers from a second defect: it concedes too much to the skeptic; perhaps more than a staunch rationalist is willing to concede. The lost terrain is too big. A conception of small rationality is certainly less metaphysically disturbing and philosophically noisy. But the silence of reason in matters of a theoretical and speculative nature can invoke the cost of an inconvenient vacuum of sovereignty.

We will, using the author's suggested terminology, call this form of diminished rationality Copernican. This Copernican – non-objective based - conception of rationality does not seem to extend to the theoretical realm, which is where the dispute over the legitimacy of knowledge takes place; this diminished reason holds firm exclusively in an extra-speculative dimension. Even inference, the terrain of operation of reason, is treated as a mere subsumption of rules by broader rules, running the risk of becoming dialectical (or distorted reasoning) whereas it tries to reify that subsumption as an unconditioned object. As a practical, moral dimension, reasoning may be used under the impression of justifying itself only as a sort of ceremonial monarchy engaged at best with a narrative oversight of its history of sovereignty over human-beings practical ability to reflect on their problems. We emphasize here the circular character of rational self-justification, already present in the justification of the pure concepts of the understanding. This reading is not without support in Kant's text, as we can see in this excerpt from the Prolegomena:

> But how this peculiar property of our sensibility itself is possible, or that of our understanding and of the apperception which is necessarily its basis and also that of all thinking, cannot be further analyzed or answered because it is of them that we are in need for all of our answers and all our thinking about objects.[12]

Contemporary commentators are not indifferent to the question. G. Anthony Bruno thinks that Kant's strategy is part of a concession to the skeptic. It assumes that an appeal to

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[12] KANT, Immanuel. *Prolegomena to Any Future Metaphysics*. Translated and edited by Gary Hatfield, revised edition. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004, § 36, 318–319.

Revista Enunciação. Seropédica, v. 8, nº 1, 2023

ISSN 2526-110X

90

VOLLET, Lucas Ribeiro

Questions and problems left by Kant to think about the contemporary crisis of Human rationality: a reflexive organization of themes involving the legitimacy of Reason

pure categories, as norms to ground our judgments, should not be made arbitrarily, despite a *Deduction* of our right to them: "a transcendental deduction of the categories' necessity is required insofar as their necessity is not self-evident"[13]. In fact, this shows that Kant's project was always to advance a realist argument on an idealist basis. It is necessary to justify the mediation of knowledge by the categories so that they are not taken as dogmatic presuppositions of knowledge: "a transcendental deduction thus has the peculiar quality of showing that the categories are necessary conditions of experience and yet that we have no rightful claim to them prior to deducing them."[14]

Although this is not the commentator's voiced target, this reading favors a less psychological, and more sociological, interpretation of the role of categories in our understanding. It promotes the thinking of categories as a matter of normative and institutional justification. It is of the kind required to sustain a claim to right, rather than a call for individual and despotic dominance. Another piece of serious scholarship engaged in this orientation, the article by Vedran Grahovac *The Tenacity of "Vicious Circularity" in Kant and Husserl* (2018), adds important insights on the connection between the justification of applying pure concepts to intuitions and the *competence* of the judgment that operates this application. As the author emphasizes in the last paragraph: "the fact that the system and its correction can be seen through each other and as each other is made clear precisely through Kant's amplification of the fact that reason's capacity for regulation needs to be seen through the lens of reason' self-regulation."[15]

Those authors show an aspect of human self-regulatory activity involved in building the stability of the mediation of human knowledge, both in its enrichment and in the maximization of its consistency. That said, this shift in focus is fascinating and rich, but not so exotic that it has not served as a guideline for entire traditions of post-Kantian interpretation, such as the problematization of the cultural formation (*Bildung*) of our models of knowledge justification. Be that as it may, this line of reading remains unattractive to epistemological foundationalism, since it continues to develop the problem

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[13] BRUNO, G. Anthony. "Skepticism, Deduction, and Reason's Maturation". In *Skepticism: Historical and Contemporary Inquiries*. Routledge, 2018, pp. 203-19, p. 203.

[14] *Ibidem*.

[15] GRAHOVAC, Vedran, "The Tenacity of 'Vicious Circularity' in Kant and Husserl: On Transcendental Deduction and Categorial Intuition", *Horizon*, n. 7, v. 1, 2018, pp. 32-56, p. 55.

Revista Enunciação. Seropédica, v. 8, nº 1, 2023

ISSN 2526-110X

91

VOLLET, Lucas Ribeiro

Questions and problems left by Kant to think about the contemporary crisis of Human rationality: a reflexive organization of themes involving the legitimacy of Reason

in coordination with a question of the degree of stability, i.e., the kind of stability achieved by human institutions to create zones of peace for rational debate. We may bring here the question of comfort and security, without posing the question of "truth" as what one would aim to decide when discussing the categories that condition our cognition.

The mysteries that the category talk aims to substitute: the demystification of pure categories

Studied as a historical phenomenon, Kant's methodological choices involve a problematic relationship with the type of mentalism privileged as the focus of debate by post-Cartesian empiricism. The conceptual apparatus provided by Kant engages psychology in a coordinated debate with forms of idealization and representative unit-functions that are no longer psychological – although may be described by some normative dramaturgy or morality of psychological public behavior. When we say that these idealizations or *a priori* projection conditions are no longer psychological but may be described as a morality of psychic energy, we identify an aspect of the theoretical region addressed by Kant that adds structural layers to psychology. In other words, Kant presents psychological layers super structurally. One of the simplest ways of identifying these superstructures is as layers derived from psychology. Social and cultural institutions are natural candidates for super-psychological expressions of what occurs within the realm of public thought.

This is one more mystery associated with Kant's categorical problem. In the history of philosophy, it can be said that the author has structured the passage from a psychological to a semantic reflection since the conditions of possibility of the object of thought are now represented by a superstructure of representative unification that fixes intuitive knowledge in objectification of higher order idealities, capable of basing links between empirical possibilities mathematically (category of quality and quantity) or dynamically (category of relationship and modality).

The main successful consequence of a theory of categories is that it explains the great mystery enunciated by the *Critique of Pure Reason*: how are synthetic *a priori* judgments possible? How are representations of *a priori* connections between predicates

Revista Enunciação. Seropédica, v. 8, nº 1, 2023
ISSN 2526-110X

92

VOLLET, Lucas Ribeiro

Questions and problems left by Kant to think about the contemporary crisis of Human rationality: a reflexive organization of themes involving the legitimacy of Reason

that are not analytically contained in the subject representation possible? Kant enunciates the possibility of synthetic *a priori* judgments as the more general problem of the validity of universal and apodictic judgments of natural science and mathematics. This mystery, apparently inscribed as an epistemological enigma, is a broader human problem. It describes the mystery of the ability to devise models that offer a priori restrictions on the temporal course of empirical reality, and the solution to this problem involves answers about the foundation of the formation (Bildung) of a scientific culture capable of self-recognition and self-justification.

But as we saw in the last chapter, the enigma also opens the door to deeper skepticism. We will call it the demystification of pure categories. It opens the door to thinking about the fallible nature of the conditions in which the agreement between our concepts and intuitions occurs. First, one may think of this agreement as a mere semantic algorithm. This is the first demystification. Furthermore, it opens the door to the second demystification of transcendental conditions, which occurs when we give up thinking about them from the semantic perspective of the "proposition" or other institutionalizations present in cultural and scientific paradigms – these last de-mystifications may come from naturalistic campaigns, but also the campaigns of anthropological relativists.

In this conflicting situation, it is difficult to say which ground has been gained against the skeptic, if any ground has been gained. In addition, the subject is not concluded within a framework that opposes Humeans and Kantians. Within the German tradition of thought which is part of the network of alliances with Kantianism, another line of interpretation of the categories seems to favor a conception of the pre-conceptual power of our conditions of knowledge. Heidegger famously developed the philosophical hermeneutic view that any comportment toward beings presupposes the preunderstanding of being: "the interpretation has already decided for a definite way of conceiving it, either with finality or with reservations; it is grounded in something we grasp in advance - in a fore-conception."[16]

Strictly speaking, there is a reason why the position of the author of Being and Time was allied with Kant and not with Hume. This line of thought is anti-Humean, in the fullest

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[16] HEIDEGGER, Martin. *Being and Time*. Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 2001. p. 191.

Revista Enunciação. Seropédica, v. 8, nº 1, 2023

ISSN 2526-110X

93

VOLLET, Lucas Ribeiro

Questions and problems left by Kant to think about the contemporary crisis of Human rationality: a reflexive organization of themes involving the legitimacy of Reason

sense: Heidegger does not surrender to psychologism, and only considers the transcendental part of a conception of the preconditions of the thought of Being. What is 'transcendental' rather than psychological is not the essence of Being, but the essence of the question about Being. This question and the practical conditions that host it retrace the path to the finite nature of the questioner and reveal the way in which the questioner's nature is an essential part of what makes the problem an open possibility of thinking on Being.

However Kantian may Heidegger be, there are unforeseen channels in every theoretical advance, and Heidegger's work has effects that Kant would not have wanted – on any orthodox reading. The black forest thinker develops an anti-logocentric and pre-conceptual aspect of Kant's theory of "conditions of possible experience" that, to say the least, do not support a rationalist view. To say more, it supports an irrationalist view. And, accordingly, although it differs from Hume in the method and that from the outset refuses to align with a naturalistic frame of problematization, the Heideggerian project ends up coming into alliance with the spirit of skepticism about rationality and the de-mystification of the theoretical foundation of our judgments and inferences.

Kant himself got caught up in a cycle of circular explanations when he needed to use the term transcendental to define the kind of subjective ideality that distinguishes an objective cognition from a mere succession of representations. One of the hopes of this article is that, if we cannot get out of this circle, at least we can redefine the transcendental character - understood as the axis of opposition to natural explanations - with greater benefit to answer the question at hand.

Kant and the inferentialist semantic tradition: categories as a system of rewards in a game of asking for reasons

Kant's theory, on paper, indicates the right path of epistemological foundationalism, which guides the kind of step that has to be taken when we want to leave the field of psychology (which would evaluate representations as copies or associations) and enter the field of truth and justification – which requires us to think about our presence as human beings based on practical assessment of what is propositional and can be included as "truth"

Revista Enunciação. Seropédica, v. 8, nº 1, 2023
ISSN 2526-110X

94

VOLLET, Lucas Ribeiro

Questions and problems left by Kant to think about the contemporary crisis of Human rationality: a reflexive organization of themes involving the legitimacy of Reason

in our life story. Kant offers a theoretical trajectory capable of approaching this transition from psychology to the problem of truth. He thus abandons the theme of representative fidelity or subjective association in favor of the theme of the justification we have for sustaining an intentional state in a dispute (anticipating, here, the place of the "other" – the one who asks for reasons – in the set of pressures that contribute to building a place of perspective). The aim was to prepare philosophy to think about truth and justification – the problem of judgment – in terms of the right to ask and reclaim reasons in a dispute.

He approaches this through a technical set of thinking whose sophistication resists any objection. The absolute proof of the reach of this technical apparatus is that it started a new era of reflection on the representative capacity, which slowly abandoned its psychological origin and entered the semantic terrain. The semantic part begins when the psychological representation is evaluated as a rule to guide interpretations, through mapping schemes between concepts and intuitions. This delimits the conditions of meaning and the selection of what is meaningful in opposition to non-sense, providing a place of perspective that is not self-centered, because it is constructed in a paradigm of understanding that may sustain the claims of truth in an assertion.

As a bonus, modern philosophy has been rewarded with a new way of thinking about the logical question of consistency and completeness of reasoning. Knowing whether a conclusion definitively excludes possibilities incompatible with itself and its premises is knowing an aspect of the conceptual structure or the categories that select how much an interpretation can prove without competing conclusions; it is to know the limits of semantic mapping of a system of meaning. Inconclusive (incomplete) inferences or inferences with conclusions inconsistent with the premises (inconsistent) are examples of a broader class of pseudo-propositions or meaningless propositions. They have a predatory relation to the categorial matrix of possible inferences; they force categorial ruptures because they cannot conciliate the state of our knowledge and information and what they can prove: "I must never undertake to have an opinion without at least knowing something by means of which the in itself merely problematic judgment acquires a connection with truth which, although it is not complete, is nevertheless more than an invention."[17]

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[17] KrV A 823 / B 851.

Revista Enunciação. Seropédica, v. 8, nº 1, 2023
ISSN 2526-110X

95

VOLLET, Lucas Ribeiro

Questions and problems left by Kant to think about the contemporary crisis of Human rationality: a reflexive organization of themes involving the legitimacy of Reason

This means that to know the "logical form" that structures the material derivation of the logical consequence is to know which are the primitive conceptual elements – the categories – that produce meaningful connections, including valid inferences. Valid inferences are not therefore some class of super-beings represented by logical forms. They are mere consequences of the game rules of a conceptual system. The selection of what is significant is now evaluated by a decision procedure: a rule or judgment that maps or fails to map intuitive possibilities to the concepts and propositions judged. The value of this Kantian revolution may not be consensual among logicians, especially extensionalists who resist the idea that there can be any cognitive content (a semantic super content) associated with our inference structures. But it has become the trigger for an inferentialist tradition, whose origins lie in Frege's notion of Sinn, and which spreads successfully through the pragmatic theory of W. Sellars and Robert Brandom. Let's quote the beginning of the excellent exegetical work of Jaakko Reinikainen to save presentation time:

> The reason for focusing on Brandom is that his ambitious aim is to combine the pragmatist preoccupation with our epistemic, justificational, linguistic practices with a robust enough account of objectivity to meet at least some desiderata of traditional realist intuitions. His "deontic scorekeeping model" therefore offers a particularly fruitful theoretical crossroads where the more abstract ideas above can break lances.[18]

According to this tradition, what is relevant to the meaning (the semantic rule) of our utterances is defined by the role that uttered sentences play in a game with a consistent rewarding system to control risk, award reasons, and charge "tolls" for reasonings with high inferential content (which is the Kantian activity of judging in its simplest aspect: discerning between rewarding and nonrewarding assertive strategies, or between conclusive and inconclusive inferences).

The problem then is what is the nature of this inferential or "playing games" ability to give and ask for reasons? For there is an inevitable circularity in our attempts to define this nature. It is a circularity that pragmatism cannot avoid because they need to define the structure of correct inference through the superstructures that condition the game in which

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[18] REINIKAINEN, Jaakko. "Brandom and the Pragmatist Quest for Semantic Objectivity". *Acta Philosophica Fennica*, 97, 2021, pp. 55-78. p. 55.

Revista Enunciação. Seropédica, v. 8, nº 1, 2023
ISSN 2526-110X

96

VOLLET, Lucas Ribeiro

Questions and problems left by Kant to think about the contemporary crisis of Human rationality: a reflexive organization of themes involving the legitimacy of Reason

this inference is correct (social interaction, language). This is a circularity that Kant himself fell into when he Deduced (Transcendental Deduction) his categories by appealing to the nature of possible experience and defining possible experience by appealing to the nature of the categories. We are getting to the point where a transition to Hegel and his sophisticated explanations of the circularity of thought becomes inevitable, which explains the step taken by Habermas conceptions of public rationality[19].

Be that as it may, these digressions leave some information intact. One of them is that Kantian inferentialism represents an important milestone in Kant's struggle to prove that the conditions of possibility of agreement between objects and concepts have more sophisticated layers than merely extensional ones – what we previously called superstructural layers. It is important to realize that Kant had to go beyond the extensional conditions described by the mere law of non-contradiction, otherwise, he would not be able to give transcendental-logicality conditions to predict the intentionality of scientific assertions. He would not be able to predict the objective content of statements with high empirical and hypothetical content (such as counterfactual assertions). Counterfactual representation is not extensionally innocent (precisely because the law of non-contradiction does not predict its use); to represent a contrary-to-fact state of affairs with a semantic value is not easy, as it causes destabilization in communication paradigms and in our ability to codify "intentionality" - the principles of the possibility of an assertion - eventually creating *superstructures* to enrich our possible experiences.

Now, our reading hypothesis is that Kant's theory of categories states that those superstructures are to be based on *apperceptive or synthetic-transcendental principles*. If they are based on intellectual intuitions or mere sense-data, they will fail to code an intentional unit[20]. Going further, this discourse leads to the expansion of game conditions and communication paradigms. Empirical science, insofar as it tries to re-code the conditions of intentionality to predict – to give an interpretative rule to – hypotheses and counterfactual assertions, ends up expanding consistency criteria itself. In this

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[19] HABERMAS, Jurgen. *Knowledge and Human Interests*. Boston: Beacon, 1971, p. 168. Habermas seeks to explain "knowledge-constitutive interests" that correspond to "the natural history of the human species" and to "the imperatives of the sociocultural form of life".

[20] For if I wanted to think of an understanding that itself intuited (…) then the categories would have no significance at all regarding such a cognition. (KrV B 144-145).

Revista Enunciação. Seropédica, v. 8, nº 1, 2023
ISSN 2526-110X

97

VOLLET, Lucas Ribeiro

Questions and problems left by Kant to think about the contemporary crisis of Human rationality: a reflexive organization of themes involving the legitimacy of Reason

paraconsistent task, empirical science does not differ from the political action of the imagination (whether delusion, dream, or utopia) in the construction of solutions to problems of consensus and reforms for paradigms of social communication. Kant's theory of apperception is his take on the normative conditions of those paraconsistent expansions in the flow of representations.

Principles of modal thinking materialize conditions of possibility in superstructures or schemes of the imagination and formalized versions of human self-recognition. Against Kant, however, we may have to say that those expressions only meet material anchors deep enough to reflect non-sublimated human rational reality when it reflects the political concreteness of an era and their related ways of institutionalization of social interaction and scorekeeping practices.

Conclusion and Last Chapter: the unanswered questions that Kantian philosophy expresses and diffuses as basic aporias of our time

The first chapters of this article served to spread the suspicion that transcendental philosophy – even when answering the naturalist skepticism – failed to dispel a broader skepticism (a demystification of) about the logocentric and semantic nature of our conceptual strategies. Even among the heirs of transcendental philosophy and German Idealism, a feeling prevails that certain canonizations of the conceptual apparatus used to discern, and judge are unnecessary mystifications of something far less venerable: the human practice of giving and asking for reasons in a game. This less venerable something was stated by several descriptions of the superstructural cultural and anthropological formation of idealizations and "ontologies", but we can summarize it, for economic purposes, as the presence of the human being as a problem for himself.

Our view - which we believe is substantiated by the paper - is that this skepticism about rational practice is indeed compatible with transcendental philosophy. But this demystification of immutable rationality, and its exchange for one linked to the historical and human problem, is not an obstacle to a vision of strong rationality, which is above mere habit, prejudice, and bias. We may be skeptical about the ultimate foundation of human

Revista Enunciação. Seropédica, v. 8, nº 1, 2023
ISSN 2526-110X

98

VOLLET, Lucas Ribeiro

Questions and problems left by Kant to think about the contemporary crisis of Human rationality: a reflexive
organization of themes involving the legitimacy of Reason

idealizations, without refusing that they are rational and reflect some conception of human dignity that is not negotiable, i.e., absolute. Sir William Hamilton summed up the same sentiment in the following passage:

> Kant had annihilated the older metaphysic, but the germ of a more visionary doctrine of the absolute, than any of those refuted, was contained in the bosom of his own philosophy. He had slain the body but had not exorcised the spectre of the absolute; and this spectre continued to haunt the schools of Germany even to the present day.[21]

With that, we conclude our article. In this last chapter, we ask the reader to get used to a digression that will go beyond the scope of a mere conclusion. We will explore the aporias and problems raised by this tradition of philosophical inquiry.

The above framing of the Kantian problem can be done with greater or lesser care, but it captures the bulk of his theory, without delving into the thorny terrain of whether it answers to contestations of Reason sovereignty conclusively. What this picture leaves open, however, reveals the scope of the philosophical problem initiated by Kant and represents some of the *aporias* of our time. When thought from the perspective of the ability to justify representations with high inferential content, Kant spread the need of explaining precisely what the nature of this faculty of idealization is. He spreads the need to explain what the normative foundation of the pragmatic faculty is of "playing games by the rules", that *pulls* the speculative content in the direction of a rewarding trend (true judgments or conclusive syllogisms).

Of course, in a system of bets, we naturally set the price of risk by building a bank to reward less the most probable scenario. In a system of categories, we may suppose the same logic is active. Categories work as the *house*. The valid inferences are the ones that do not entail extraordinary propositions, i.e., those that do not bet against the house. They are the safe bets. Surprises and miracles are more expansive to bet – the onus is higher. Eventually, they would break the house. If the house or the bank is too cheap to be broken, we may suspect that the system of rewards needs revision. There is no other parameter to increase the strength of the bank. It is important to know that because knowing that a

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[21] HAMILTON, Sir William. *Discussions on Philosophy and Literature, Education and University Reform*. London: Longman Brown, Green and Longman, 1853. p. 25.

Revista Enunciação. Seropédica, v. 8, nº 1, 2023
ISSN 2526-110X

99

VOLLET, Lucas Ribeiro

Questions and problems left by Kant to think about the contemporary crisis of Human rationality: a reflexive organization of themes involving the legitimacy of Reason

representation is rewarding or not (less false than true, less inconclusive than conclusive, etc.) is just knowing whether it is derivable in the simplest and most unhindered way within a categorical system.

Of course, this still does not answer the meta-question: how do we justify – or, in Kant's words: how do we *Deduce* – this system of categories? When playing a game, we set that game with rules that make it fair for all players. So, we may hope that the categories of a system will reward equal risk with an equal degree of "points." This circular explanation is all we got. Since there is no "natural" or "technical" explanation of this game scenario that is not, at the same time, circular, Kant opened the opportunity to seal the fate of modern philosophy as an *aporia* of a new character, which is expressed in his discourse as a "transcendental problem".

The aporia materializes at the limit of the question about the normative conditions that characterize the practical life of the human being as an experience of possible truth or assertive success – which is institutionalized in cultural and scientific paradigms of a historical epoch.

Modern pragmatism has given up on answering this question, simply surrendering to the presence of the social structures that sustain the institutionalization of the game of asking for reasons. No further reflection on power structures behind the institutionalization of those superstructures was asked.

But the European philosophical tradition, which has not overcome the need to legitimize the sovereignty of reason, needs to devise explanations of another kind about the presence of categories and the self-legitimizing presence of human beings as those who manage to use "truth" (successful assertion) as a normative end to delimit rational interactions. This legitimation is needed because now we know as a matter of fact that our paradigms of understanding change along with changings in scientific methods and cultural norms. The European philosophical tradition is far from solving disputes to demarcate the difference between science and pseudo-science. It lacks the thesis to explain who would benefit from a Transcendental Deduction – or at least an *ideological legitimation* – of the categories and the game structures that systematize our parameters of communication practices and paradigms of rationality. This European tradition needs to explain what the

Revista Enunciação. Seropédica, v. 8, nº 1, 2023
ISSN 2526-110X

100

VOLLET, Lucas Ribeiro

Questions and problems left by Kant to think about the contemporary crisis of Human rationality: a reflexive
organization of themes involving the legitimacy of Reason

nature of the categories is, or it needs to see the dynamics of the formation of paradigms and semantic consensus from another perspective – maybe the perspective of historical claims for reason's sovereignty.

It is necessary to explain the nature of this faculty of idealization, or of unification of the manifold, because during the history of philosophy this mystery was not better clarified by stating, simply, that this is what characterizes us as human beings, what distinguishes us from animals, or yet more ideologically, what resembles God in us.

Given that, Kant's theory sometimes seems to overestimate its potential to answer the mystery behind this super-psychological faculty. It overestimates the explanation of this ability to go beyond the limits of reproduction, copying, and association and cross the bridge to objective, universal and apodictic reality, where the objects relevant to organized and scientific human experience are. We will not improve the philosophical view on the problem of truth and knowledge simply by saying that this is the faculty that puts us right at an advanced place in the rank below the gods, and above the brute animals. But if we can't have a psychological nor natural answer, an ideological validation along with some moral meta-image of humans mirroring themselves in the anthropomorphic "dramaturgy", seems to be all that is left. Mystic and fetishized narratives of us seem to be unavoidable, and part of a ongoing narrative war for hegemony.

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101

VOLLET, Lucas Ribeiro

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102

VOLLET, Lucas Ribeiro

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organization of themes involving the legitimacy of Reason

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103