

FRACTAL COMPLEXITY IN THE SYSTEM OF PURE REASON. UNITY, TRUTH AND PERFECTION AS STRUCTURAL MOMENTS OF TRANSCENDENTAL CRITIQUE OF REASON

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Abstract: *The specific manner in which transcendental philosophy deals with the complexity of reality has itself led to both sophisticated and complex systems whose unity are difficult to see. This applies in particular to Kant's philosophy, which not without reason has the reputation that its sub-areas are only loosely and at best externally held together by the Kantian method. I firmly oppose this view. Kant's philosophy is not characterized by the fact that it considers a system of contingent sub-areas of human existence, but rather by the strict development of a single principle. This principle is that of an apperceptive reason, i.e. an ultimate cause that must be grasped as such through itself. It is striking that each of the three critiques of reason pick up the thread of the investigation precisely where the previous one dropped it. In accordance with the synthetic-syllogistic structure of conceptual determination, reason thus passes through three interwoven lines of reasoning in order to be able to expose its own concept as the basis of all knowledge in the course of the third critique. However, Kant's efforts in the Opus Postumum point to the fact that there is still a gap here, as well as to the possibility of closing it.*

Keywords: Philosophy – Reason – Category – Deduction – Logic – Spontaneity

Resumen: *La manera particular en que la filosofía trascendental aborda la complejidad de la realidad ha conducido a concepciones sistemáticas igualmente exigentes y complejas, cuya unidad apenas puede percibirse. Esto se aplica especialmente a la filosofía de Kant, que no sin razón tiene la reputación de que sus diferentes ámbitos solo están débilmente y, en el mejor de los casos, externamente unidos por el método kantiano. En este artículo, realizo una crítica decidida a esta opinión. La filosofía de Kant no se distingue por considerar una sistemática de ámbitos contingentes de la existencia humana, sino por el riguroso desarrollo de un único principio. Este principio es el de una razón aperceptiva, es decir, de un fundamento último que debe ser comprendido como tal por sí mismo. Llama la atención que cada una de las tres críticas de la*

razón retoma el hilo de la investigación exactamente allí donde la anterior lo había dejado. Conforme a la estructura sintético-silogística de la determinación conceptual, la razón recorre así tres trayectorias de fundamentación entrelazadas entre sí, con el fin de poder exponer, en el curso de la tercera crítica, su propio concepto como fundamento de todo conocimiento. Que, sin embargo, aún haya aquí una laguna lo indican tanto los esfuerzos de Kant en el Opus Postumum como la posibilidad misma de cerrarla.

Palabras clave: *Filosofía – Razón – Categoría - Deducción - Lógica - Espontaneidad*

Anyone who has ever studied philosophy knows that the architectural designs of the systems of German Idealism, including Kant's own philosophy, are among the most complex intellectual constructs ever devised by the human mind. Their complexity is simply a consequence of the nature of their object, which is the one whose complexity cannot be surpassed, namely *reality* itself (*Wirklichkeit*). Nevertheless, all the systems of German Idealism have a peculiarity that is capable to irritate today's scientistic thinking. Unlike the latter, transcendental philosophy does not take reality or what is real as given, but attempts to question the possibility of its 'given-ness', commonly known as its objectivity. Now a given is logically impossible without self-givenness, therefore objectivity cannot be conceived without subjectivity, whereby this relationship appears unambiguous at first glance; however, this is deceptive. The 'self' and the 'given' are beings, that both exists in the way beings exist ('seinsmäßig Seiende'), whereby the respective mode of their being is essentially ('wesenshaft') different. Thus, the question of reality seems to arise as a question of being and its essence. This classical metaphysical view of philosophy is by no means wrong, it just cannot be answered with its means. What it fails to recognize is that it makes being and its essence themselves into givens or the indirect relationship between self-givenness (being) and givenness (essence). This higher realism is therefore still characterized by that which already characterized the lower realism from which it emerged, *hypostasis*. Both misjudge the nature of their 'object' by viewing and attempting to discuss it in the manner of a thing. They are both expressions of an ontology of substance characterized by intellectual thinking. The 'brand essence', if you like, of 'German Idealism' now consists in abolishing this very thinking and leaving it behind. It recognizes that the idea of substantiality as a given, which is inherent in the concept of being, must also be dissolved. Substance is essentially relation. However, precisely because of this, it is not a relation of given relata, but the relata themselves are only functions or expressions of that basic function, which is relation. Substance is relation in itself; this is precisely what *determines* substance.

Determination in turn means exclusion, i.e. *difference*. Accordingly, the determination of substance cannot stand on its own, but necessarily evokes the opposition that determines it and the opposition determined by it. In the case of substance, it lies in the externality of the determination itself, i.e. *the ground*. This in turn necessitates a double determination with regard to its relationship to substance, namely to be a material or formal ground. The material ground of substance is substance, the formal ground of substance as the relation of substance to itself as well as to other substances is the law. Together they determine *causality*. It is well known that *substantiality* (substance and accident) and *causality* (cause and effect) are the first two categories of relation. The inter- or syncategorial relationships will only be hinted at here, as they have been sufficiently developed elsewhere.¹ The aim here was merely to outline the idea of constitution, or rather genetization, as a core component of German Idealism in oppo-

¹ Cfr. Bunte (2016).

site to to apophantic thinking about being. However, this is more than a mere repetition of the Heraclitean-Parmenidean opposition. Rather, German Idealism attempts to think constitution and principle in one. Its thinking is absolute, or in other words, it is the attempt to think the absolute out of itself. Only in this sense does German philosophy rightly use the term 'idealism', namely not in the sense of opposition to realism, insofar as the latter is concerned with the basis of opposition to the former, but as 'Idea'-(l)ism, i.e. as a way of thinking in terms of ideas or reason. German idealism is thus a legitimate part of *philosophia perennis*. How Kant's 'idealism' is understood in this way is the subject of this study.

The Idea of the Critique of Pure Reason

To assess the importance of rational thinking for Kant's philosophy, it is enough to look at the title of his main work, 'Critique of Pure Reason'. If you take a closer look at the history of the work, you will see that Kant himself initially defined the title of the first Critique too broadly, or too narrowly, depending on your perspective. In fact, the concept of a 'Critique of Pure Reason' encompasses the whole of Kant's system and not just its theoretical part. What is quite astonishing about Kant's system is that, although its author worked on it until shortly before his death and changed his work plan several times, it is of improbable stringency and coherence. The reason for this is undoubtedly to be found in Kant's thought on reason, or in other words, the critique of reason is itself nothing other than the systematic development of the *idea of reason*. At this point, one could just as well use post-Kantian terminology and speak of the *idea of the absolute*. Objectively, the same thing is meant, namely the attempt to establish the entire system of knowledge as ultimately founded on something that is itself unconditional. Even in the formulation of the title, the pattern according to which reason unfolds is laid out and can be read, as it were, in the form of the ambiguity of the genitive. Kant uses this linguistic device at almost all systematic junctures in order to express the perspectivity of a concept linguistically. Thus, the genitive in the title of the Critique can be interpreted in three ways: Firstly, it can be understood to mean that reason itself is the criticizing instance. In this case, it would be the subject of criticism, and the genitive would accordingly be a *genetivus subiectivus*. On the other hand, reason is the object of criticism. The genitive would therefore be a *genetivus obiectivus*. Most introductory texts to the *critique* take this fact into account, whereby the third meaning is hardly or not at all to be found, namely the presupposed identity of criticizing and criticized reason, which emerges in the concept of critique itself. By criticizing itself, reason 'is' genuinely criticizing reason. It therefore has only one subject, namely itself.² The meaning of the genitive here is that of

2 Cfr. KrV, A 680/B 708.

The critical self-preoccupation of reason is not to be confused with that of rationalist metaphysics, although both rely on the reflexivity of reason. For transcendently reckless metaphysics, the content of reflection secretly becomes a determinable thing. In this bad sense, metaphysics abolishes the difference between understanding and reason.

Cfr. *Proleg.*, AA, IV: 327.

an absolute, hence a *genetivus absolutus*. Only these three readings adequately describe the synthetic quality of reason. The title of the *Critique* thus already captures the subject that transcendental philosophy is concerned with, namely the possibility of a *synthesis a priori*.

Synthesis is the intensional-logical object of analysis, thus the formal self-disclosure of the concept about its epitome as the basis of every real determination. Its foundation or *substrate* is reason itself. Self-criticism of reason therefore means determining from and through reason the condition of the possibility of all concrete knowledge. Now critique, or *determination*, is essentially synthesis. Reason is therefore both the synthetic principle of analysis, which concerns its constitutive side, and the analytical principle of synthesis, which constitutes its reflexive side. In other words, reason as a principle is both reflection and the object of reflection as well as the principle of the unity of reflection and the object of reflection, thus reflexivity as the epitome of reflection. It is therefore a constitutionally reflection or reflection-constitutive or, in short, an *apperceptive principle*.³ This also makes it clear that reason will appear in the form of *threefoldness*.⁴ In one of the few methodologically instructive passages in his work, Kant provides information on the nature of triplicity:

That my divisions in pure philosophy almost always turn out tripartite has aroused suspicion. Yet that is in the nature of the case. If a division is to be made a priori, then it will be either *analytic* or *synthetic*. If it is analytic, then it is governed by the principle of contradiction and hence is always bipartite (*quodlibet ens est aut A aut non A*). If it is synthetic, but is to be made on the basis of a priori *concepts* (rather than, as in mathematics, on the basis of the *intuition* corresponding a priori to the concept), then we must have what is required for a synthetic unity in general, namely, (1) a condition. (2)

3 I share the concept of apperceptive reason with Kurt Walter Zeidler. Since both Zeidler's approach of a 'final justification based on logical reasoning' and my own apperception-logical reconstructive approach start from the idea or the structure of conclusion, the commonality goes far beyond terminological similarities. In particular, there is a commonality in the assessment of the so-called 'Münchhausen trilemma' in its positive significance as a sign of the final justification procedure, which also forms the basis of the presentation of the connection between the three *critiques* presented here. For Zeidler's approach, cf. Zeidler (2016). For a joint discussion of our approaches, cfr. also Zeidler (2017: 301 ff.) and Bunte (2020).

4 The connection between synthesis and analysis also explains the idea of fivefoldness, which is central to the architecture of Ficht's *Wissenschaftslehre*. Since both forms, synthesis and analysis, are heterothetic determinations of unity itself, it follows that every explication of a determination of unity, insofar as it is to be complete, must necessarily be fivefold. The reason for the fivefold is simply due to the fact that every analytical-logical determination is binary according to the 'principle of determinability', and every synthetic-dialectical unity is triadic according to the 'principle of continuous determination' (cf. KrV, A 571/B 599). The analytical-synthetic principle of unity therefore has five moments. Through the combinatorial connection of the analytical moments (matter vs. form) to a total of four and that of the three synthetic moments (condition, conditioned, ground), the logic of fivefoldness immanent in the science of knowledge can be transformed into the well-known Kantian triad and *vice versa*.

something conditioned, (3) the concept that arises from the union of the conditioned with its condition; hence the division must of necessity be a trichotomy.⁵

As the title of the *Critique* already anticipates, reason appears as the condition, the (self-) conditioned and the concept of the unity of the first two moments. If the title of the ‘Critique of Pure Reason’ is taken to mean the unity of the three critiques, then the idea suggests itself that each of the critiques should be understood in such a way that reason is exposed in each case as condition, conditioned and concept, whereby the third self-critique of reason, in the outcome of which its concept stands, constitutes the precondition of the first and second determination - positing and opposition. In fact, the situation is exactly that, although strictly speaking one should not speak of three critiques, but only of three versions or passages of the one critique, each of which has one of the three determinations of reason as its exponent. All three moments of reason can be found at the level of each passage, so that the large structure is reflected in the small one. The complexity of Kantian philosophy is therefore fractal, as it were, and is based on the multiple iteration of a simple principle in three moments. How this happens will be briefly demonstrated below.

I. The first Critique: Reason as condition of unity

The *first Critique* as a *Critique of Speculative Reason* is at the same time the *Critique of Understanding* (‘Kritik des Verstandes’).⁶ In order to understand it, it is therefore essential to understand what constitutes the mind (‘Verstand’) as mind. With Kant, understanding is a formal, i.e. non-content-productive, object-oriented performance of spontaneity. It is therefore the capacity (‘Vermögen’) of *rules* and *concepts*,⁷ or in short of *categoriality*. In terms of terminology, this provision is nevertheless capable of leading astray. By ‘capacity’ we mean neither the *potentia* of a thing nor the *facultas* of a person or an individual subject. The categorical mind is therefore neither a physical or physiological circumstance that can be located neurologically, for example, nor is it a psychological habit of thinking that is based on a semantic substrate; rather, the mind or understanding (‘Verstand’) designates the necessary circumstance of the possibility of categoriality itself. Categoriality is neither empirically found, nor empirically provable, nor is it an invention of reflection. Rather,

5 Kant, Critique of Judgment, 38 (Introduction IX, B LVII; AA V, 97): „Man hat es bedenklich gefunden, daß meine Einteilungen in der reinen Philosophie fast immer dreiteilig ausfallen. Das liegt aber in der Natur der Sache. Soll eine Einteilung a priori geschehen, so wird sie entweder analytisch sein, nach dem Satze des Widerspruchs; und da ist sie jederzeit zweiteilig (quodlibet ens est aut A aut non A). Oder sie ist synthetisch; und, wenn sie in diesem Falle aus Begriffen a priori (nicht, wie in der Mathematik, aus der a priori dem Begriffe korrespondierenden Anschauung) soll geföhlt werden, so muß, nach demjenigen, was zu der synthetischen Einheit überhaupt erforderlich ist, nämlich 1) Bedingung, 2) ein Bedingtes, 3) der Begriff, der aus der Vereinigung des Bedingten mit seiner Bedingung entspringt, die Einteilung notwendig Trichotomie sein.“

6 Cf. KdU, B V; AA V, 168; p. 4.

7 Cf. KrV, A 160/B 199; KrV, A 299/B 356.

reflection is the ground ('Grund') for its discovery ('Fund'). This is precisely what characterizes the understanding, if one understands it as a condition. The only difference between understanding and categorality lies in this very view on grounding and is thus already categorized. It is therefore pointless to ask whether the understanding categorizes ('kategorifiziert') or the understanding is the reason for categorization. Rather, there is an identity between the two. This is not merely analytical, however, but synthetic, and lies in the unity of reason and form, which is expressed in the categorical and which in turn is expressed in the attunement in the comprehension of the comprehension and the comprehended, that is, the categorized, and thus the understood. The relationship between understanding and what is understood is therefore not an external one. Rather, what is understood is only understood through the understanding. The epistemic elementary relationship is accordingly based on a transcendental one. In this sense, the intellect ('Verstand') is the transcendental ground of understanding and thus categorality itself.

The distinction between ground and categorality therefore lies in reflection. In reflection, the moments of the categorical differ in what is categorically affected. What is affected, in the sense that it makes affection possible in the first place, is first and foremost the understanding itself, insofar as it contains the basic distinction of the categorical. Understanding as a principle therefore contains both identity and difference. In other words, categorality, on the one hand, holds back the possibility of its difference as a difference from the ground through the categorical statement of its identity. In this case we speak of categorical understanding. On the other hand, it sets itself the categorical determination and thus its ground as a task, in which case we speak of the intellectual ground of categorical determination. However, it is always the *same spontaneity* that just expresses itself differently.⁸ How does this manifest itself in concrete terms? On the one hand, in the difference between the categorical and the *category*. The individual category as such only emerges from the categorical, the understanding, through reflection, and thus through the critique of reason. This happens in a very specific way, which constitutes its twelvefold nature. The number of twelve is simply the result of the fact that the categorical can be understood as categorially conditioned, conditioned and as the concept of the differentiated unity of both. This in turn is the precondition of the basic epistemic relationship between subject, object and the cognitive relation between them. This triplicity is extended fourfold, and thus subsequently to twelvefold, in that each moment in turn contains a triplicity, namely the respective correspondence of positing, determination of positing - or determination and positing of determination as determinacy - and the ground of the determined positing or determined determination that mediates them, which in turn has an external, i.e. modal, relationship to the whole. However, the categorial, i.e. synthetic difference to its ground, i.e. to understanding, also occurs at the level of the category. The category as a unity exhibits

8 Cf. KrV, B 162; S. 200.

a self-differentiation that is in turn synthetic and thus triplicitous. Thus the category in its mere relation to the understanding can be understood as purely intellectual-logical. As such, it is a pure function within a differentiated unity, i.e. a primal part. Here understanding appears as a condition, namely as pure, self-perceiving thinking. The categorical is represented here in the so-called judgment table; its ground is pure thinking, or rather the power of judgment. However, the intellect ('Verstand') can also be understood as the categorically conditioned. As a result the mind, which is a ground in itself, i.e. spontaneity, comes into contradiction with itself. This contradiction can only be resolved through a self-differentiating distinction between cases. It is categorically affected and affecting, i.e. simultaneously *reproductive and productive intellect*. This contradiction can only be mediated through time, namely on the one hand by the understanding appearing as a ground in time, and therefore as a source of knowledge, and on the other hand by the understanding being the ground of the appearance outside of time. In this context, Kant therefore also aptly speaks of the world of understanding ('Verstandeswelt').⁹ However, the resolution of the contradiction has the consequence that the phenomenon and its ground diverge as categorially correlative (object) and non-correlative (non-object), i.e. as the phenomenon and the appearance of the phenomenon. At the level of understanding, this tension cannot be eliminated. At the same time, however, it determines the appearance of understanding as a faculty of figurative synthesis, i.e. as *imagination* ('Einbildungskraft'). The categorical, in turn, manifests itself here in time, namely as an image or *schema of time*. Pure form of thought or judgment and mere temporal schema are now inseparably connected in the concept of understanding, i.e. in their relation to their ground. This relation to the ground is at the same time the precondition of their *difference*, namely *modally* according to the *content* and *form* of the categorical, i.e. on the one hand thinking as the content of itself and on the other hand as the form of the thought in correspondence to it. Thus it is found that a purely logical basic-sequential relation has its temporal image in the sequence of mutually determining events. Herein lies the *concept* of the categorical and with it the concept of the individual *category*.

The concept of the category is the concept of a manifestation of a form that manifests itself and yet is always already manifest. In the language of the *second critique*, one could speak of it or of categoriality as a *fact of pure understanding*.¹⁰ The term *factum*, or rather the genitive associated with it, is once again associated with the three-sidedness that was already inherent in the title of the *critique*. The same applies to the concept of *function* as the *unit of action*,¹¹

9 KrV, A 255/ B 311.

10 A closer look reveals a respective doctrine of fact in each of the three *critiques*. In the *first critique*, the factum as consciousness of action, in the *second critique*, the consciousness of validity, and in the *third critique*, the factum of being and its appearance, or the unity of experience, which in the *Opus Postumum* coincides with the factum of perceptible space, i.e. the ether ('Äther').

11 KrV, A 68/B 93.

which is central to the first *Critique*. This is no coincidence, insofar as function and fact have the same systemic meaning in their respective contexts. All three readings of the genitive are also valid in the definition of function: the action is the origin, the affected and, through its concept, the unit itself. The connection to categoriality as a transcendental basic functionality becomes immediately clear if one substitutes the term ‘action’ with that of ‘reasoning’, which constitutes the mind as a whole. The mind ‘acts’ by founding, and it does so *spontaneously*. What it finds is the transcendental basic content of subjectivity and objectivity and the constituent categoriality that mediates them. The question of the valence of theoretical knowledge of the object thus leads to the inescapable standpoint of the unity of ground and basic content. However, it is precisely this ineluctability on the part of theory that becomes a problem, since it exposes its first beginning as necessarily dogmatic and at the same time self-contradictory, precisely through the binding together of ground and basic content, i.e. *spontaneity* and *categoriality*, since both relate to each other like *lawlessness* and *law*.¹² What theoretical reason cannot show is that spontaneity, i.e. freedom, by itself prescribes or identifies lawfulness. The final reasoning of theoretical reason, which ends dogmatically with a supreme principle, thus leads to the initial question of practical reason.

II. The second critique: Reason as a conditioned by truth

Practical reason transcends the framework of possibilities of theoretical reason in that it is a law-giving authority for itself and is itself law.¹³ The fact that it as such does not go beyond the framework of critical philosophy as a whole is solely due to the fact that the scope of its legislature does not extend to that of the understanding. The consequence of this, however, is that the field of possible experience is divided into two areas, the area of the natural order and the area of the order of freedom. Bringing them together will prove difficult. From the standpoint of practical reason alone, the relationship between the two is clearly subaltern. The natural order as the order of appearance reality rests on the order of freedom as the order of the world of law, i.e. the world of reason. They are related to each other as appearance and self. In other words, reason shows itself in the practical as the truth of appearance and as such leaves the realm of appearance behind. This also explains the primacy of practical reason¹⁴ over theoretical reason, since reason in its theoretical use is restricted to the realm of the lawfulness of understanding and thus to the world of appearances. At first glance, it seems strange that the genuine place of the question of truth should be sought in the realm of practical reason. However, this is due solely to the fact that ordinary thinking conceives of freedom only in terms of intellect (‘Verstand’). Instead of conceiving of freedom as the

12 „Natur also und transzendente Freiheit unterscheiden sich wie Gesetzmäßigkeit und Gesetzlosigkeit [...]“ KrV, A 448/ B 476.

13 Cfr. GMS, AA IV, 412.

14 Cfr. KpV, AA V, 120.

basis of the natural order, or thinking of nature in terms of freedom, intellect seeks to secure a place in nature for freedom, if possible, where it is able to act without prejudice to the unconditional validity of the laws of nature. Kant now turns this way of thinking completely on its head by consistently thinking of the world in terms of reason.¹⁵ Kant's practical philosophy is therefore first and foremost "a single reflection on freedom", as Baumanns rightly writes.¹⁶ The structure of this reflection is briefly outlined below. First of all, it must be noted that for Kant 'freedom' does not primarily mean a property of rational beings, but a concept of reason, i.e. a concept of reason itself. Freedom is not something that anyone can dispose of. On the contrary. Freedom disposes of us and it is only through this disposability that we can think of ourselves as free beings. What therefore needs to be clarified through reflection is what it means that reason itself *is* freedom.

The exponent of the reflection is freedom as theoretical reason understands it in its starting point, namely *as pure spontaneity* ('reine Spontaneität'). That this must be the case can already be seen from the meaning of the concept of spontaneity, namely the ability to begin through and from oneself.¹⁷ Spontaneity thus describes the ground of thetic, or categorical, positing. Self-initiation can only be conceived negatively, i.e. in the manner of lawlessness. Kant therefore also speaks of the *negative concept of freedom* ('negativer Begriff der Freiheit').¹⁸ However, this already opens up a distinction and thus a determination, namely to the concept of law. The judgment 'spontaneity is lawlessness' thus proves to be not a negative, but an *infinite judgment* ('Unendliches Urteil') We must now ask what it means that the spontaneity of reason has its definite opposite, and therefore its limit, in the concept of law. The obvious thought here is to understand the opposition of freedom and law as external, as it is commonly understood. However, this idea stems from rational thinking. Reason has no external antithesis, but only itself as its destiny, just as it can only have itself as a definite antithesis of itself. The law in question must therefore also have its origin in reason, or more precisely be a concept of reason itself. In fact, we already have this concept, namely in the form of *truth*. Truth, insofar as it is a truth to be recognized, has the form of an absolute commandment, namely to recognize it as such in cognition. The demand "Be free!", which is made to the finite, rational being, is therefore first and foremost a request to agree with itself, insofar as freedom constitutes the true nature of its being beyond mere appearance. This freedom, however, is not the neutral concept of a *liberum*

15 Since today's discussions about 'compatibilism' and 'incompatibilism' are all conducted from the perspective of understanding ('Verstand'), they fundamentally fail to grasp the point of the reality of freedom that accompanies Kantian thinking of reason.

16 Baumanns (2000: 7)

17 Cf. KrV, A 447/B 475.

18 Bernd Ludwig has rightly pointed out that the terms „negative freedom“ and „positive freedom“ are not used even once by Kant himself, cf. Ludwig (2013: 272). The predicates „negative“ and „positive“ refer to the concept of freedom, not to its object. The predicates are therefore different conceptual definitions of one and the same freedom. The distinction should therefore not be understood as if, according to Kant, there were two types of freedom.

arbitrium or even *arbitrium brutum*, but rather rational freedom and as such moral freedom. Thus, *the identity of freedom and morality is the only morally constitutive instance*.¹⁹ In fact, the term ‘formula’ is more appropriate, since we are not dealing with merely semantically different representations of the same facts, but with their structural determinations, which can be equated in a mathematical sense. The formula structure thus reflects the structure of reason, namely firstly the subjective conditionality, secondly its objective self-conditionality and thirdly reason as the concept of the precondition of both; the latter in turn can be understood from both the subjective and the objective side and is thus twofold. Accordingly, the formulas refer firstly to the ability to set subjective rules, i.e. to the determinations of maxims; secondly to the legal form according to the type of a natural law and thirdly to the interaction of rational beings capable of purpose, which on the one hand prohibits their mere use of means and on the other hand requires their unity in the sense of an intelligible connection. This gives rise to the well-known formulas of the categorical imperative: *maxims, laws of nature, ends and empire*. (‘Maximen-, Naturgesetz-, Zweck- und Reichsformel’) The twelvefold multiplicity of categories as a specification of the categorical is also found with regard to the fact of reason, namely in the form of the categories of freedom. Both, formulas of ought and determinations of freedom, can be precisely mapped onto one another syncategorially.²⁰ Just like the pure undeduced concepts of understanding, the categories of freedom condition the possibility of *imputability*. In contrast to the categories of understanding, however, it is not a question here of the ownness of an idea (‘Vorstellung’), but of the attributability, i.e. imputability of an action. Thus, the categoriality of reason transposes the categories as apperceptive determinations into practical basic determinations of the person or *personality*. The theoretically formal and thus materially indeterminate thus becomes a materially determinate practical principle. In fact, the relationship between indeterminacy and determinacy is precisely the relationship between theoretical and practical reason that constitutes their determinacy. This relationship can be understood abstractly as the *relationship between unity and truth* in the transcendental sense. Both are in turn moments in the ultimate form of the absolute and as such are completely complementary to each other. Thus, the theoretical concept of reason exposes *absolute subjectivity* as the highest point of unity and thereby breaks off the chain of reasoning upwards. The absolute subject, which determines the transcendental form of the empirical proposition ‘I think’, excludes the possibility of its predication: The thinking subject is always subject, even if it tries to think itself as thought, it has necessarily always already thought this as subject. The situation is different with truth or *validity*. To say that ‘the truth is true’ necessarily leads to a regress, because every statement about the truth already claims its truth for itself. The ‘error’ lies in the fact that truth has been made the subject. However, this is impossible, since truth as a determinateness always moves away from the predicate position in the attempt to make it

¹⁹ Cfr. Baumanns (2000: 65).

²⁰ Cfr. Bunte (2018: 123 ff).

the subject of a determination. Accordingly, it is an *absolute predicate*, i.e. pure hypothesis. The problem of regression therefore also emerges at the end of the practical reflection of reason as a faculty of law. It arises directly from the highest determination of practical reason as *autonomy*, which at the same time forms the precondition for the unity of its negative concept of freedom as well as its character as law. The contradiction inherent in the concept of autonomy arises from the presupposed identity of freedom and lawfulness ('*Freiheit und Gesetzlichkeit*'), which presents itself on the level of practical reason as morality, i.e. as practical reasonableness. Thus, the basic contradiction of understanding is now repeated at the level of reason, albeit in a transformed form. Thus, it must be said of the identity of reason, which is expressed in the concept of its autonomy, that 'it is valid'. However, reason can only say this of itself. Thus, in its practical concept, it encounters an infinite series of self-statements about its own validity. This infinite regress of reflection can only be calmed if reason addresses *itself* in its autonomy as an original '*self*' and thus autonomy gains an originally reflexive form. Only with this could the practical contradiction between *self-sufficiency* and *autonomy* ('*Autarkie und Autonomie*') be resolved. In fact, this is precisely what happens in the third critique, which begins with reason as *heautonomous subject*.

III. The third Critique: Reason as the concept of perfection

The *third critique* is probably the most enigmatic of all. The reason for this is, on the one hand, that Kant uses it primarily to address the problem of the coherence of his system, which is central to him, but its actual scopus disappears behind the object or objects on the basis of which the question of unity is addressed. In a sense, it is a victim of its own success, insofar as the actual question of the complete concept of reason and its unity were overshadowed in favor of Kant's reflections on aesthetics and teleology. In terms of research history, this is particularly evident in the fact that the question of unity is hardly (seriously) discussed in research today. The second reason is more prosaic, namely that the third critique was simply unable to achieve what it intended. This now needs to be examined more closely. This will be done on the basis of three key questions: (1) What is the third critique about? (2) How are its parts connected? (3) What does the third critique achieve systematically?

Ad (1): The last part of the Critique of Reason is famously entitled 'Critique of Judgment'. This choice of title is indeed strange at first glance, as it breaks with the nomenclature used by Kant up to that point. The historical reason for this lies in the multiple changes to the plan of the work. It can be assumed that Kant considered the *Critique of Pure Reason* to be complete in 1781. Kant thought of its 'practical' part only as an application and accordingly as subaltern.²¹ This was to change in 1784/85 at the latest with the *Groundwork for the Metaphysics of Morals* and the idea of a separate 'Critique of Purely Practical Reason'.

21 Cf. KrV, A 15. This has been discussed in research within the framework of the so-called 'canon problem'. To this, cf. Guérault (1963).

In the course of this, Kant retroactively changed the title of the ‘Critique of Pure Reason’ to the ‘Critique of Purely Speculative Reason,’ which would contain a critique of the object of knowledge. In the draft, he countered this with a *critique of the subject*²² in the form of a ‘Critique of *Purely* Practical Reason.’ Kant also distanced himself from this plan, at the latest with the second Critique in 1788, which was simply called *Critique of Practical Reason*. In its preface, there is a justification for this approach, which represents a deviation from the draft presented in the *Groundwork for the Metaphysics of Morals*. In it, Kant writes that the program of a ‘critique of pure practical reason,’ i.e. a critique that attempts to show the insight into the condition of the possibility of a practical reason itself, must go beyond the scope of the critique of reason in general. The critique of practical reason must therefore take its starting point from the reality of the practice of freedom, which proves the possibility of freedom.²³ On the one hand, Kant thus takes into account the factual foundational character of (practical) reason, which he already addresses in the *Groundwork*²⁴ and which is reflected in the ‘doctrine of facts’ of the *second critique*. On the other hand, Kant may have encountered the ‘problem of regress,’ which stands at the end of a critique of a purely practical reason, which in turn is shown in the Typology of *purely* [emphasis added] Practical Judgment’ (Typik der rein praktischen Urteilstkraft)²⁵ of the *Critique of Practical Reason*. Kant’s original binary structure - critique of the object and critique of the subject - thus fails. In order to succeed, the disintegrated project of the critique of reason requires a synthesis that can be carried out on the basis of a complete concept of reason; it requires - unsurprisingly in retrospect - a *third* critique. This is accompanied by a reorganization of the work. The shibboleth of this reorganization is the limiting relationship between receptivity and spontaneity. Thus the *first critique* becomes the *critique of understanding* (‘Kritik des Verstandes’), i.e. a critique of limited but constitutive, since object-oriented spontaneity, and the second critique becomes the *critique of reason* (‘Kritik der Vernunft’), which deals with an unlimited, hence absolute spontaneity, which nevertheless has no constitutive function, namely with regard to the faculty of desire, and as such is merely subject-oriented, hence reflexive.²⁶ Receptivity and spontaneity, objectivity and subjectivity, constitutivity and reflexivity, i.e. the relationship between understanding and reason, thus determine the starting position of the *third critique*. *Prima facie*, this is surprising, as it repeats the relationship between *analytic* and *dialectic* already discussed in the *first critique*. What is significant, however, is that this relationship is not symmetrical, but expresses a claim to foundation. The unity of reason is of

22 Cf. GMS, AA IV, 440. To this, cf. Bunte (2022).

23 Cf. KpV, AA V, 4.

24 Cf. GMS, AA IV, 452.

25 KpV, AA V, 67.

26 Cf. KdU, B V, AA V, 168. Kant’s changed nomenclature is the outward sign of his inner self-understanding and increasing factual insight. Accordingly, there is nothing casual about it, contrary to what Reinhard Brandt thinks (Brandt 2007: 591).

a more fundamental nature than the unity of understanding. Already in the *first critique*, the latter was formative for the former. But this too now becomes a problem, insofar as the *matter-form dichotomy* now itself becomes thematic. In the Third Critique, Kant therefore attempts to approach the investigation of the critique of reason anew from the deepest point, and thus the contrast between *fundamentality and legality* ('Grundsätzlichkeit und Gesetzmäßigkeit') that has been negotiated since the First Critique. What is sought is the concept of reason as the concept of its complete epitome, which constitutes the *intelligible substrate*, i.e. the rationally comprehensible ground of phenomenal reality and its laws. This idea is already known from the *first Critique*, namely as that of a perfect concept, i.e. as a transcendental *form*, i.e. 'prototypon transscendentale'²⁷ and its complete epitome, the transcendental *field*.²⁸ Here, too, the fractal, self-similar structure of the investigation becomes apparent. The three *critiques* can each be understood through the concept of reason they each have at their center, i.e. through the idea ('Idee') from which they proceed, which are themselves moments of the one *idea of reason* and thus in turn moments of their *critique*. The *first critique* treats the unity of the phenomenal world on the basis of the unity of consciousness, the second critique its truth from the reality of freedom and the third critique the unity of both from the necessity of the transcendental unity of matter and form of the phenomenal world, i.e. of *field and form*, in the form of reason as a 'supersensible substrate'. This reason would be the one that could be called transcendental in the proper sense. One could therefore justifiably call *the third critique* the *Critique of Transcendental Reason*. The fact that Kant's self-description of his philosophy as transcendental in relation to the ideas became increasingly central can be seen in the reflections of the so-called *Opus postumum* on the title of a 'transcendental philosophy'. In 1790, however, Kant still oriented himself towards the division of faculties, so that the third critique was given the title of a critique of the power of judgment. This is due in particular to the fact that Kant had significantly expanded his concept of judgment. Whereas at the time of the *first Critique*, the power of judgment was only to be defined as a judgment-logical faculty of the intellect, i.e. to be subsumed, Kant expanded it to include its reflexive, i.e. reason- or inference-logical meaning. The *subsuming and reflective power of judgment* can thus be established as an intermediary faculty of understanding and reason. In this construction, it is noticeable that the role of theoretical reason remains strangely underdetermined. Kant only grants it the function of knowledge of the law as an intermediary between understanding and (practical) reason.²⁹ In doing so, he seems to be falling foul of his own semantics of faculty, which makes it difficult to express a disjunctive identity, insofar as, despite the different designations of the faculties, it is a single figure of self-mediation; in short, theorizing reason is active power

27 KrV, A 572/B 600.

28 Cfr. KrV, A 95.

29 Cfr. KdU, B xvii.

of judgment, namely constitutive and reflexive faculty, as reason's idea of itself, as it presents itself to thought or in philosophical reflection. In other words, the *third critique* deals with the theory of a transcendently constituted reason and thus takes up the theme of its spontaneity as comprehensive. The specific opposition of a practice to this theory would no longer be philosophically formulable, simply due to the fact that the concept of such a practice would in turn be absorbed into the theory as a concept, and thus theorized. This does not mean, however, that this concept, in its opposition to reason, plays no role; the opposite is the case, insofar as reason finds its determination in it. It is only necessary to warn against understanding it as merely theoretical. For this concept is simply that of *life* itself.³⁰

Ad (2): How are the parts of the *third critique* connected? Superficially, this thematizes two heterogeneous or even diametrically opposed objects, *art and nature*, which are connected externally through the use of reflective judgement, i.e. merely in terms of faculty theory. In research, their parts are therefore preferably treated separately. Starting from the question of the transcendental meaning of reason, however, their connection is not only much closer, but the parts of the third critique are also necessary as determinations of reason. The '*Critique of Aesthetic Judgment*' forms the first part of the *third critique*. If our reading of the three critiques as a unity is correct, in which each critique begins with the aporetic outcome of the previous one, then the third critique should begin with the indeterminate relationship between autonomy and autarky and the regression problem that follows from it. In fact, this is precisely the case, as already indicated. Kant solves the problem by allowing the actor and addressee of the autonomous action to become one. Autonomy becomes reflexive from the transcendental standpoint of reason, i.e. self-legislation becomes self-legislation for oneself, *autonomy* becomes *heautonomy*.³¹ Reason is *heautonomous* and as such relates solely to itself. This transcendental *heautonomous subject* can, following philosophical tradition, be understood as a monad. In monadically constituted reason, *unity and uniqueness*, thus unity and truth as well as *apperceptivity and appetition* ('*Apperzeptivität und Appetition*') fall into one. However, the monad is not a substantial being or something being ('*Sein oder Seiendes*'), it is a position of reason in which being and relation to being enter into a certain opposition to the uniqueness of the monadic constitution. This opposition is now opposition par excellence, 'true correlate'³² and abolition of all relation. Since the monad is in turn only pure self-relation, i.e. pure thinking, its ultimate opposition consists in the abolition of every relation, i.e. in pure being, or in Kant's terms, *substrate*. The 'supersensible substratum' is both the basis of the unity of thinking and being that is subtracted (subtracted) from thinking, and thus also the non-relational antithesis

30 Troxler made an attempt at transcendental deduction from the idea of life itself in his '*Biosophie*'. Cf. Troxler [1807] and Bunte [2020a].

31 KdU B xxxvii; AA V, 185.

32 Cf. KrV, A 30/B 45.

of relationality itself, and therefore the basis (subtract / 'Grund-Lage') of every particular positing. Monad and substrate relate to each other like fold and unfold. Their relationship is accordingly an *architectural* one, with which the first part of the *third critique*, in which Kant discusses the self-relation of reason on the basis of its appearance in art and the general subjectivity of aesthetic judgment, moves on to the second part.

The second part of the *third critique* deals with the opposite of art, namely, nature. Just as the singular, subjective, but at the same time universally valid experience of beauty is the expression or manifestation of a self-contained reason and its self-referential self-legislation, the second part, entitled '*Critique of Teleological Judgment*', deals with the manifestation of a reason mediated by its opposite. As practical freedom, reason is a purpose-setting instance. At first glance, one would therefore expect Kant to see the purposeful character of reason simply implemented in nature, i.e. to regard nature as purposeful and therefore rationally organized. Kant and Aristotle would thus agree in the importance they accorded to the *causa finalis* as the highest point of scientific-theoretical insight. In fact, the opposite is the case! For Kant, the explanation by the end in nature is only an epistemic-heuristic auxiliary construction and insufficient for a real scientific, i.e. nomological-causal explanation.³³ Causal explanations, however, are explanations of understanding ('Verstandeserklärungen'), so how does the strange reversal come about that the ideal of reason becomes the ideal of understanding? The reason for this lies in the fact that reason itself becomes understanding. What seems strange *prima facie* turns out to be inevitable on closer inspection. Thus, nature *formaliter spectata* is nothing other than the unity of experience, which has its ground in the transcendental unity of apperception. Nature is thus not merely a pre-found being to which the intellect refers *ex post*, but originally rational, lawful experience. However, the relationship between transcendental unity and empirical affinity cannot ultimately be fully resolved at the level of theory. The reason for this lies in the conceptuality of term of theoreticality (see above). Only against the background of a way of thinking that unites theory and practice in their transcendental conditionality through the unconditioned can the problem of empirical affinity and its solution be outlined at all. Thus the unfolding of monadic reason takes place architecturally; it itself thereby becomes the epitome of the objective in general, an *architectural mind* ('architektonischer Verstand').³⁴ It should be noted that this understanding, the architectural mind, is infinitely far removed from what human understanding is, insofar as the latter has *intellectual perception* ('intellektuelle Anschauung'). The difference between concept and perception, between thinking and thing, does not exist for the architectural mind; for it, thinking becomes a thing. The idea that thinking becomes a thing is known from transcendental dialectics, namely as the hypostasis of the pure thought structure of the unity(ies) of reason to the familiar three ideas. This is also a *hypostasis*, i.e.

33 Cf. KdU, B 316; AA V, 388; KdU, B 330 f.; AA V, 396.

34 Cf. KdU, B 317; AA V, 388.

a substantiation of thinking, but of thinking in general. In other words, the world or the cosmos as a whole is a single hypostasis of reason that has become understanding.

Ad (3) Kant's speculative final chord, however, is strangely dissonant and flat. It consists in relying on the architectonic establishment, i.e. the ontological valence of transcendental concepts for reasons of rationality and normality. The outcome of the three critiques is thus the regulative diminutive of the transcendental-speculative concept of reason to a methodological-heuristic one. On top of that, this is logically insufficient. Even the reference to the limit of the knowledge of reason is not sufficient here. If it were left at that, the transcendental endeavor to methodologically resolve the contingency of being and thinking would simply have failed. If one looks at Kant's follow-up efforts in the *Opus postumum*, it becomes obvious that he must have seen it this way as well. What the *third critique* lacks is simply a *third part* that brings the reasoning process of reason as a whole to a conclusion. At this point, we refrain from a detailed description of such a resolution and leave it with a reference to a forthcoming work, but not without giving a hint of the possibility of such a positive resolution of the transcendental project. The solution consists in tying together the beginning and the end of the system of the critique of reason. Thus, monadic reason stands for the only source of the determination of validity on the one hand, and on the other hand as architectural mind, as a form of the quality of validity realized in terms of being. Reason thus takes the form of two absolutes – think of what has been said about the absolute subject or predicate. Now the attempt to think unity as the perfection of both, i.e. to bring it to the concept, actually ends in a outreach into *transcendence*. There is indeed an absolute limit here, which, however, must be defined. This limit is namely that of infinity(ies) itself, or rather, that which is distinguished despite its embedding in infinity, i.e. that which stands at the boundary of two infinities and whose being is simultaneously determined by this boundary. This is the *human being*.

IV. Conclusion

Transcendental philosophy thus actually ends with the question of man and yet at the same time begins with him. The true end of the *third critique*, which in terms of content deals with the differentiation of the intellectual view into thinking and viewing, thus prepares the beginning of the first critique, which begins with precisely this opposition. It is only against this background of separation that the relationship between fundamentality and legality, spontaneity and categoriality, which dominates all three critiques, finally becomes comprehensible. Accordingly, the system of the critique of reason closes in on itself, whereby this closing in on itself is at the same time a self-development, i.e. an unfolding, from which a complex pattern of self-repetition arises. This would indeed be the end of the 'critical business', but the actual philosophical work would only just begin, namely, to think through all dimensions of the human experience of the self and the world, (natural) scientific, cultural or emotive. The end of transcendental philosophy is therefore also its actual beginning and emergence.

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