



# Challenges and impasses in Kant's theory of truth and judgment: An interpretation of Kant's anti-Realism

Desafíos e impasses en la teoría de la verdad y el juicio de Kant: una interpretación del antirrealismo de Kant

Desafios e impasses [dúvidas] na teoria da verdade e a análise de Kant: Uma interpretação do antirrealismo de Kant

Lucas Ribeiro Vollet

Universidade Federal de Santa Catarina  
Santa Catarina, Brasil  
luvollet@gmail.com

Recibido: 13 de junio de 2022

Aceptado: 18 de diciembre de 2023

## Abstract

This article has three objectives. The first is to show the inevitable ambiguity between realism and idealism in Kant's work. The second is to show the nature of Kantian realism as his response to the skeptic and a reflection on the objective distinctness of representations. The version of empirical reality proposed as the answer to the skeptic, however, has overt elements of anti-reality: it is built in the tension between the idea of proof and the idea of truth. Kant employs the theory of apperception and judgment, which functions by generating pure conceptual parameters (categories) to address this tension. The manner in which Kant's theory of apperception and judgment offers solutions to the challenge of aligning truth and proof is in line with epistemic, anti-realistic, anti-metaphysical, and non-classical approaches to logical representation (which aligns with Kant's transcendental logic). Lastly, we will present an overview of the discourse surrounding the nature of Kantian empirical realism and compare it to the version of "reality" advocated by metaphysical perspectives, empirical science, and common sense.

## Keywords

Idealism — Anti-realism — Kant — Apperception — Transcendental



**Resumen**

Este artículo tiene tres objetivos. El primero es mostrar la ambigüedad inevitable entre el realismo y el idealismo en la obra de Kant. El segundo es mostrar la naturaleza del realismo de Kant como su respuesta al escéptico y una reflexión sobre la distintividad objetiva de las representaciones. Sin embargo, la versión de la realidad empírica propuesta como la respuesta al escéptico tiene elementos manifiestos de antirrealidad: está incorporada en la tensión entre la idea de prueba y la idea de verdad. Kant emplea la teoría de apercepción y juicio, que funcionan generando parámetros conceptuales puros (categorías) para abordar esta tensión. La manera en que la teoría de apercepción y juicio de Kant ofrece soluciones al desafío de alinear la verdad y la prueba está en línea con abordajes epistémicos, antirrealistas, antimetafísicos y no clásicos de la representación lógica (que se alinea con la lógica trascendental de Kant). Por último, presentaremos un resumen del discurso que rodea la naturaleza del realismo empírico de Kant y lo compararemos con la versión de “realidad” defendida por las perspectivas metafísicas, la ciencia empírica y el sentido común.

**Palabras claves**

Idealismo — Antirrealismo — Kant — Apercepción — Trascendental

**Resumo**

Este artigo tem três objetivos. A primeira é mostrar a inevitável ambigüidade entre realismo e idealismo na obra de Kant. A segunda é mostrar a natureza do realismo kantiano como a sua resposta ao cético e uma reflexão sobre o caráter objetivo das representações. A versão da realidade empírica proposta como resposta ao cético, contudo, tem elementos evidentes de anti-realidade: é construída na tensão entre a ideia de prova e a ideia de verdade. Kant aplica a teoria da aperceção e do julgamento, que operam gerando parâmetros conceituais puros (categorias) para se ajustar a essa tensão. A forma como a teoria da aperceção e do julgamento de Kant propõe soluções para o problema de alinhar verdade e prova é consistente com soluções epistêmicas, anti-realistas, antimetafísicas e não clássicas para a representação lógica (que é compatível com a lógica transcendental de Kant). Por fim, ofereceremos um retrato da discussão sobre a natureza do realismo empírico kantiano e compará-lo-emos com a versão da “realidade” apoiada pela visão metafísica, pela ciência empírica pelo senso comum.

**Palavras-chave**

Idealismo — Anti-realismo — Kant — Aperceção — Trascendental

### Preliminaries: A brief history of the twenty-century reception of Kant's problems

Among the rich profusion of problems generated and discussed by the vast Kantian philosophy, there is a problem that stands out for having been the detonator of the *Critique of pure reason*:<sup>1</sup> the question about the possibility of metaphysics.

To solve the problem, Kant mixes traces of classical empiricism and the rationalism of his time. In the general outline of this solution, we see a theory of judgment posited in response to the skeptic, but ironically, this theory is accompanied by an idealism that sees reality not as something fixed, but as the result of a mixture of form and material elements that make up human experience.

At first, it is difficult to avoid the impression that transcendental philosophy is a rhetorical trick to disguise orthodox rationalism's thesis, certain neo-Cartesianism about how we build certainty in judgment. This impression is not entirely wrong. Kant must negotiate concessions, and the content of his book is largely the story of that negotiation. The task of Critical Philosophy is not impoverished if it is described as the set of concessions Kant makes to maintain the authority of pure reason even without the aid of metaphysics. A substantial part of the first critique is devoted to untying the knots that tied metaphysics to pure reason. This is done through a critical attitude. By upholding rationalism without metaphysics, the book opens the doors to non-formal logic (transcendental logic), conditional realism, and non-material idealism.

However, the ambivalences of Kantian thought become visible only against the background of the tradition he wanted to change. And in this sense his thought is downright revolutionary. His alternative neutralizes skeptical defeatism without an intolerant dogmatic resistance.

In the first sequence of this paper, we will examine some interpretive possibilities that seem to call into question the maintenance of interest in Kant's work and its solution. The discussion will centre around the

---

<sup>1</sup> Immanuel Kant, *Critique of pure reason* (Cambridge University Press, 1998). Abreviattion for *Critique of Pure Reason: KrV* Kritik der reinen Vernunft (1781, 1787). Cited by A/B pagination.

interest that the academic community and common sense may have in a concept as nuanced as Kant's idealism. The strategy pursued below is to present transcendental idealism and its compatibility with certain kind of realism, with different emphases in each presentation, in order to assess some possibilities for problematization within the possible horizons of consensus about the Kantian legacy. This first wave of debate will prepare us for a further discussion that will conclude the article with a proposal about the character of the idea of reality spread by Kantian idealism. We want to highlight the lessons that this idea gives us about the fallacies of philosophical realism based on the belief of knowledge in supersensible ideas.

Peter Strawson in *The bounds of sense* states, commenting on Kant's innovations: "These are very great and novel gains in epistemology, so great and so novel that, nearly two hundred years after they were made, they have still not been fully absorbed into philosophy consciousness."<sup>2</sup> Strawson also states, however, that part of Kant's doctrine is "an essay in the imaginary theme of transcendental psychology."<sup>3</sup> Bennett declares:

It is easy to agree that transcendental idealism is unacceptable; but to know how it functions in the Critique, how much damage it does, and how much of what it does is damage, one needs a criticism of it, which is accurate, deep, and comprehensive. We have this too, in Strawson's forty pages on "The Metaphysics of Transcendental Idealism."<sup>4</sup>

Peter Strawson was one of the most popular commentators on Kant to try to take advantage of this double nature to save just one of the arguments and withdraw from the metaphysical commitments present in Kant's transcendental idealism.

Be that as it may, it is never advisable to underestimate the sudden variations in the intellectual winds, which returned to Kant's favor when the main philosophical methods and strategies of analytic philosophy and logical positivism suffered a dramatic loss of adherents. The idea that knowledge needed to be conditioned by formal filters, and that we do not

---

<sup>2</sup> Peter Strawson, *The bounds of sense: An essay on Kant's critique of pure reason* (London, Methuen & Co. Ltd.; New York, Barnes & Noble, Inc, 1966), 29.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, 32.

<sup>4</sup> Jonathan Bennett, "Strawson on Kant", *Philosophical Review*, 77 (1968): 1.

have access to the things themselves, seemed to be reborn as a suspicion at the heart of philosophy. But the Kantianism claimed here was conditional. The scene of opposition to the empiricist dogmas of positivism, claimed by Quine<sup>5</sup> and Sellars,<sup>6</sup> could even have a lot in common with Kant's anti-Cartesian strategy, but it was driven by a relativist, skeptical and scientific *pathos*.

Despite recognizing the need for *forms*, it was not understood why these should be *a priori*. And the foundations of new philosophical foundationalism, based on moral theories and practical needs, seemed even more unjustified. It has never seemed clear enough in the course of commentaries and the history of Kant's readings why his rejection of the ambition to represent things in themselves would not be better explored in a pragmatic, instrumentalist, or even relativist skeptical spirit.

But this was not the philosopher's guiding line. Celebrated for his critique of rationalism, Kant left no room for greater celebration of the other side. On the contrary, the author seems content to connect the existence of truths of synthetic *a priori* judgments precisely to the inability to know things in themselves, in a combination of unseen philosophical strategies. The idea that "a priori synthetic judgments (or necessary knowledge about matters of fact) are possible" peacefully coexists with the idea that we do not have access to the things themselves.

If our aim were only like that of the looters, we could pick up what interests us in the Kantian theses district and abandon the rest without further scruples, like the inconsequential tourist who wanders around only through the glamorous parts of cities, forgetting their darkest alleys. But if we aim to establish a residence, we must co-exist along with what is controversial and suspicious. We must also recognize, along with the advantages granted by his system, the coherence with those dark alleys of his thought.

---

<sup>5</sup> V. O Willard, "Quine: Two dogmas of Empiricism", *Philosophical Review* 60 (1): 20–43 (1951).

<sup>6</sup> Wilfrid Sellars, *Empiricism and the philosophy of mind* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1997).

Another line of last-century commentaries on Kant has formed a stream of renewed interest in his doctrine. Henry Allison,<sup>7</sup> Karl Ameriks,<sup>8</sup> Robert Pippin,<sup>9</sup> Graham Bird,<sup>10</sup> Beatrice Longuenesse<sup>11</sup> and Paul Abela<sup>12</sup> form a coalition of commentators and philosophers interested in selecting a defensible Kant, one that can be defended in its most relevant doctrines.

Ironically associated by Allen Wood<sup>13</sup> to the Pied Piper, Henry Allison enchanted a new offspring of Kantian followers by proposing a reading of Kant deflated from his ontological commitments. The author emphasizes only the epistemic aspect of the transcendental recommendation and frees the philosopher from the inquisitions raised against him on the suspicion and accusation of committing an idealist heresy in the Berkeleian sense.

Ameriks proposes to investigate Kant's position as the author of an in-between thesis, or a moderate realist doctrine. Pippin suggests in his commentary a key reading centered on Kant's rhetoric in the *Prolegomena*,<sup>14</sup> where the idea of form is invoked to escape the consequences of material idealism. Bird identifies the revolutionary nature of the Kantian project as central. Transcendental idealism is emphasized in its revolutionary form. The highly controversial theory of *a priori* syntheses appears as a plausible response to the absolutist conservative approach to knowledge advocated by both rationalists and classical empiricists.

---

<sup>7</sup> Henry, Allison, *Kant's transcendental Idealism*, rev. exp ed. (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2004).

<sup>8</sup> Karl Ameriks, *Kant's elliptical path* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012).

<sup>9</sup> Robert Pippin, *Kant's Theory of form: An essay on the Critique of pure reason* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1982).

<sup>10</sup> Graham Bird, *The revolutionary Kant* (Chicago and La Salle, IL: Open Court, 2006).

<sup>11</sup> Beatrice Longuenesse, *Kant and the capacity to judge* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1998).

<sup>12</sup> Paul Abela, *Kant's empirical realism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002).

<sup>13</sup> Allen Wood, Paul Guyer, Henry Allison, "Debating Allison on transcendental Idealism", *Kantian Review*, 12 (July: 2007): 1-39.

<sup>14</sup> Immanuel Kant, *Prolegomena to any future metaphysics: With two early reviews of the Critique of pure reason* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003).

Abela and Waxman realized how Kant's conception of judgment and imagination helps to overcome the limitations of empiricism and to revoke the *myth of the given*, present even in the atomist dogmas of the first analytical philosophers. They open the way to a defense of empirical realism capable of being supplemented by transcendental idealism, or a theory of the alignment between speculation and intuition through the schematic structure of the imagination.

Longuenesse recommends a reading of the thesis of the objective unity of experience guided by the idea of judgment as defined as a guide in "Metaphysical deduction". She encourages a reading of the conditions of our knowledge identified with the conditions of a discursive intelligence, i.e., a finite intelligence incapable of understanding ideas intuitively.

According to this reading, transcendental idealism and the doctrine about the objective unity of consciousness, traditionally designed as premises for the establishment of empirical realism, can be clarified as a thesis about the impossibility of having any knowledge that does not contain the coordination and complementarity between our intuitive and discursive faculty.

Robert Hanna,<sup>15</sup> in turn, proposes that the Kantian framework for questioning metaphysics or his treatment of the crisis of pure reason sets the horizon for the discussions that unfolded at the end of analytic philosophy. Hanna's contribution to the discussion carried out in this work lies in its ability to identify, inside the recent analytical and epistemological discussion, traits also present in the discursive polarization that existed at the time of Kant.

Kenneth R. Westphal is among the team of commentators that did not pull back the force of their utterances to declare that "Kant's proofs do not require Transcendental Idealism; instead, some of his most important analysis and proofs directly undermine his own key arguments

---

<sup>15</sup> Robert Hanna, *Kant and the foundations of analytic philosophy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001).

for that idealism”.<sup>16</sup> For the emeritus professor of Bogazici University, there is a way to take Kant’s argument seriously. And everything indicates that this involves not using transcendental Idealism as a backup argument to invoke a way out of any controversy.

The choice of the deflationary reading is attractive to us because it captures what is interesting about Kant’s thesis, albeit at the cost of highlighting its most controversial aspects. A similar reading of Kant is characterized by an extreme tolerance of aspects of his formal or transcendental rhetoric, which consists in his diagnosis of the pseudo-questions that arise when philosophy is thought dogmatically and its transcendental aspects dialectically. The interpretive stance of this group of commentators chooses to spare Kant from a more severe inquisition by granting him the notion that his thesis is merely formal.

What all these commentators have in common is that they choose a reading in which Kantian rhetoric is taken seriously, or at least listened to with interest and patience. Before rashly accusing him of metaphysics, realism, or idealism, all these interpreters preferred to understand the nuances of Kant’s questioning of metaphysics and pure reason by understanding the non-ontological specificity of his realism and the formal idiosyncrasy of his idealism as two elements that converge against a metaphysical viewpoint of the modern epistemological problem—a viewpoint that places reality above knowledge. The problem of the thing-in-itself becomes only a form of expression, albeit a creative and recurrent one, of philosophy in its pre-critical form.

Our article is absorbed in the same spirit of interpretation that this assembly of new commentators sets in motion. The general idea is to take seriously the nuance of Kantian thought, instead of condemning it for not establishing its association and unconditional alliance with one of the sides of the classical debate about the nature of Reality and Ideality.

---

<sup>16</sup> Kenneth Westphal, *Kant’s critical epistemology: Why epistemology must consider judgment first* (New York, Routledge. 2020): 2.



We want to take this idea further, with a reflection on the lesson that this theory can give, despite its grainy content and its inability to give definitive answers to the problem of truth.

### Transcendental Idealism and empirical Realism: Kant's dilemma between Idealism and Realism

Transcendental Idealism is defined in the “Antinomy of pure reason” as follows: “Objects of any experience possible to us are nothing but appearances that [...] have no independent existence outside our thoughts”.<sup>17</sup> This thesis is important for its own sake and invites us to reflect on the nature of metaphysical realism's limitations. Metaphysical realism, or realism about super-sensible ideas, fails to represent nature through rules accessible to finite beings, which need intuition to make the conceptual reality discernible in representation.

In these opening words, it is interesting to note that the discussion of how Kant's arguments are to be taken seriously is heavily influenced by the blurring of the criterion of what would be a success and what would be a failure for the argument. He was split between different positions. If the “Deduction of pure categories” and the “Refutation of Idealism” emphasize a realist attitude or the application of our concepts to objects, other passages of the *Critique of pure reason*—the “Amphibologies” and the entire “Dialectic”—emphasize an idealist attitude.

The reading we would like to show offers an interpretive way to address a familiar tension within Kantian philosophy between

1. Kant's argument for empirical realism (the thesis that appearances must be known as objective phenomena).
2. Kant's argument for transcendental idealism (the thesis that appearances are not to be confused with a thing-in-itself).

It seems that we can either assume that Kant was confused and should never have said that he was proving the existence of external things when all he had in mind was an attenuated empirical version of those things,

---

<sup>17</sup> *KrV* A491/B519.

namely phenomena; or we can actually take Kant seriously and hypothesize that there is something else behind the supposed contradictions. To follow this last path, we need to work on a reading that makes do with a minimum of noise and polemic, that is, without adding too much content to what Kant said. We will follow the traces of this second option.

### **Apperception as a parameter of the unity of lower level representations to justify a judgment**

At the peak of his work on “Transcendental deduction”, Kant promises to prove that the strategies we use to represent the intuitive application of concepts of high level of generality have objective validity. They are not merely subjective decisions or inductive approximations, but ideal frames of coordination used to represent the theoretical basis of judgments, i.e., the theory about truth conveyed by those representations.

The solution is achieved by a theory about our perception of the unity of representations, or apperception. Apperceptive representation is the technical term used in the first edition of the “Deduction” to distinguish a cognitive faculty that elevates the ability to unify the manifold matter of representations above mere empirical association or imaginative reproduction. In the second edition, the consensus is that apperception expresses the representation that Kant says we would generate if we had a theoretical understanding of the truth of a propositional representation (an act that is automatically performed when we make a judgement).

Kant’s theory of apperception recapitulates Leibniz’s thesis about the perception of perceptions to establish an anti-subjectivist and anti-inductivist thesis about the nature of our understanding of possible solutions to the problem of the truth of a proposition, “a relation that is objectively valid, and that is sufficiently distinguished from the relation of these representations in which would be only subjective validity”.<sup>18</sup>

Only when we are able to think about the solution to the problem of the truth of a proposition from the perspective of the ideal parameter

---

<sup>18</sup> KrV B 142-3.

that conceptually specifies that truth, can we say that we know how to judge, or that we have a vision of truth that is not merely dialectical and inductive. Judgment involves a formal unity: "In every judgment one can call the given concepts logical matter (for judgment), their relation (by means of the copula) the form of the judgment".<sup>19</sup>

A textually conformist way of understanding the argument is an antiskeptical and antipsychological thesis based on a theory about the nature of judgment. What is important are not the psychological operations that characterize an act as a "judgment", namely, the discrimination and identification of content on the basis of parameters that can be transformed into principles or patterns of consistency. Not all of these acts are judgments; some patterns of consistency are arbitrary and underspecific, i.e., they do not select the distinctive traces of truth—in opposition to falsehood.

These operations can be explained in many ways, and for Kant it is important that they be explained by the theoretical awareness of the connection between connected contents. The content of the connections and the notion of unity that results from the operations (of distinction and identification) can only be called a judgment if there is a basis for the certainty that is conveyed in the representation of that unity. This new level of certainty functions as the theoretical awareness of the— semantically calculable—propositional dependency conditions of the judged content.

We see that here a process of elimination of doubts is represented in the process of stabilizing the form of the assertion in a judgment, through verbal copula and the subsequent representation of a minimum of content that can encode the degree of certainty contained in the representation. This process characterizes the movement of judgment to maximize its ability to explore content-relationships that can be thought without the influence of external facts, or those that have a purely formal-categorical character. Thus, what is Cartesian innatism in Kant's theory is related to the character of the formation of certainty or the elimination of doubt, insofar as the unity conceived in the representation of a content can be made explicit by methods of identifying the relation between concept

---

<sup>19</sup> KrV A 267 / B 322.

and intuition—which is possible today by mathematical-semantic and structuralist methods.

In summary, then, we are dealing with a further development of Cartesian innatism, through the reduction of the content of possible certainty to a formal minimum, which is nothing other than the very act of judgment, decomposed in its potential to capture only what is cognitively relevant to pose the propositional problem in a decidable way.

This means that for the judgment is relevant only what is solvable, the solution for the problem of truth (or falsity) of the proposition. Solving the problem of the truth of a proposition is analogous to solving the problem of the conclusiveness of an inference: both depend on the possibility of unifying the connection between theory (inasmuch as an inference is a theory about the conclusion following from the premises) and proof by an effective mechanism of calculation that represents this unity without reference to anything else. If this effective mechanism is not available, the connection can still be made, but it is not reduced to its minimum, with some dreadful consequences.

Since the problem of truth (or falsity) therefore remains open—certainty is not realized, but more than that, we would not even be able to represent the problem in a solvable way. Purely inductive, classificatory, enumerative connection, or that based on the nominalistic fixation of signs, which, in short, perform the auxiliary service of supplying our memory and guiding interpretation, do not perform a representation of certainty. Assuming judging is the theoretical awareness of the certainty contained in the assertion, those last examples are not judgments. In Kant's words, this kind of mental operation could be expressed by the use of crutches for judging.<sup>20</sup>

More broadly, any condition in which what can be proved is in conflict with what can be known will be betrayed by the existence of non-unifiable categorical parameters, conflicting logics, and psychologically as a crisis of cultural and individual consciousness. Kant's diagnosis of these conditions is comprehensive and runs throughout the transcendental

---

<sup>20</sup> KrV A 134 / B 173.

dialectic. However, since the failure to unify this consciousness is a separate issue that can be discussed elsewhere, we think it premature to opt for an orthodox transcendental or anti-dialectical solution that would define the scope of human reason and permanently define what is justifiable and what is the cry of absurdity.

### **The historical horizon of the “Transcendental deduction”**

“Transcendental deduction” is placed in a historical horizon and opposed to the skepticism that results from Hume’s radical deductivism and the argument that induction, while psychologically useful, does not produce rational certainty. Kant constructs his answer by elaborating a theory of strong cognition based on the ability to represent judgmental certainty in a superior unit of synthesis. This ultimate synthesis, the apperception, is superior only because it monitors the consistency of uncertain representations and thus controls the fit between what can be asked and what can be proved—and later elaborates a transcendental normative theory of what is intuitive (representable) to a human intelligence.

Judgment is represented as an apperceptive representation—in the post-Leibnizian sense of a synthesis of other syntheses, or the unity of all lower-level representations. According to our interpretive hypothesis, the Kantian theory of apperception is invoked by the author as an explanation of the nature of the represented unity, so that the connection conceived in a judgment is not problematic, nor subjective or based on a probabilistic degree. There is no indication that Kant disapproved of or downgraded the value of certainty achieved by probabilistic or inductive methods of evaluation, as long as they are used as a tactical adjunct or as an investigative strategy.

We can, however, detect some evidence of the author’s disapproval—mainly—of induction when he devotes himself to the account of pure acts of cognition. This apparent uncertainty can be explained by the thesis that the author argues against the notion that these (inferior) methods can be the ultimate basis of an insight.

The synthetic unity of apperception arises as a totalizing representation of the theoretical consciousness of the foundations of certainty contained in these methods—which we can call: inferior—as long as there are sufficient grounds to derive a judgment from them. Since a judgment contains the theory’s greater knowledge of the truth of a representation and thus the basis of its certainty, it is the ultimate expression of the parameter’s knowledge, uniting all subjective, inductive, and probabilistic methods and analogies in an account of the structural identity of the relation between contents. Kant, however, rejects the formalist interpretation of this structure—his system of categories is not intended as a nominalist account of the relations between signs, but as a theory of the universality of the logical parameters of relations represented in a judgment.

To conclude this section, it can be said that Kant refers to a special mental ability that deserves to be mentioned as a separate competence. This is the ability to grasp the conceptual horizon through which we can recognize the truth-conditions of a proposition. This is not identical with knowledge of the mere logical form of the judgment, but rather with knowledge that this form is an objective synthesis and not merely a subjective analogy. This, then, is the knowledge that distinguishes someone who can determine whether “p” is true or false, not a psychological bias toward an false idea of truth. This is the account of the conditions under which the judgment that “p” implies not-not-“p”, or the account of the conditions under which “p” and not-“p” are incompatible *a priori*.

In summary, we can say that in the *B edition* apperception appears as an expression of the ability to theorize the truth of a propositional representation and to solve the problem of the conditions under which it cannot be false—the problem of logical consequence. Since it is the ability to idealize the correlation between concepts and intuitions that determines the solution to this problem, apperception fulfills the function promised in the *A edition* of representing a third level of our representational associations, the one that, more than association and imagination, provides a normative account of the way the judge ideal-content and prescribing an intuitive interface for it.

Kant presents his table of categories as the ways we can make apperceptive representations of non-empirical connection between concepts and intuitions, describing those non-empirical contents as *possible experiences*.

### Charting the territory of empirical application of categories through unity of apperception

We have seen in the last section that the possibility of synthetic *a priori* judgments is a challenge of the last level of difficulty, for which there is no simple solution. In order to illustrate the possibility of synthetic *a priori* judgments, Kant answers the following question: what principle of understanding underlies the relationship between pure concepts (categories) and intuitions? This principle can also be interpreted as the competence to represent the solution to the problem of the *truth* or the *objective reality* of synthetic *a priori* judgments.

The “Transcendental Deduction” is indeed a complicated piece of argumentation that illuminates Kant’s difficulties, contradictions, and technical limitations of his more general project. The nature of this inquiry, which for Kant is one of the most profound that can be made about the nature of understanding, has not failed to attract the care of the author himself, who in the first preface preemptively denounced it as a focus of controversy that might cause some imbalance in the clarity of the chain of argumentative sections of the work: “the author may be permitted to note himself those places [...] that may be the occasion for some distrust.”<sup>21</sup>

Despite this danger, Kant continued to recognize this passage as fundamental, and for us, centuries later, it also has the advantage of traversing the most subterranean part of Kant’s attempts to prove his idealistic thesis, exposing his problem nakedly, without a layer of mature and accepted science to obscure its pre-realized part. Due to the availability of two editions of the “Deduction” today, we have access to two different attempts at the same proof, each with its own characteristics.

---

<sup>21</sup> KrV A xvii.

An idealized representation of the form of correlation is nothing but a category—a pure concept. Pure concepts or categories are maps that chart possible connections between other concepts. They show formal connections that are materially represented by this map, i.e., by a strategy of semantic correlation of concepts to *a priori* intuitions. It was not possible for Kant at his time to bring his theory up to the level of modern semantics due to the lack of tools such as set theory, diagrammatic logic, category grammar, etc. But perhaps we can say that he anticipated the pre-technical basis of these tools by showing the philosophical basis of a semantics capable of making explicit the reference (semantic value) of complex conceptual distinctions. We can call it a essentialist semantics, or the ideal basis of semantic correlations. The categories of cause and substance, for example, set in motion a mapping network to chart the realm of possible experience that anchors the theoretical concepts of Newtonian physics in an intuitive content —thus taking them out of the realm of mere speculation and thus making it possible to represent this theoretical level of knowledge in a form that can be proven, i.e., a representation of intuition compatible with that knowledge.

But modern semantics only represents our competence in representing coherent and unified mapping assignments, and cannot justify the difference between competing logical-consequences and competing models for the same concepts. Kant needs to go further. But can he go further?

We cannot use mere semantic techniques to describe the representation of scientific judgments so simply, because we cannot take the realist leap and say that these semantic mappings represent external reality. Kant is interested in more than semantics. This makes us hesitant today to accept the idea of a more successful, categorical, or ideal form of intentional strategy, because the problem of the truth of a proposition can be generated by various strategies of proof (various theoretical truth-functional models for the meaning of our connectives), not all of which can be unified or subsumed into a single and ideal strategy represented by categorical format of connections.

The different readings of implication by classical and non-classical logic shows that the semantic mapping of our expressions can compete.



Classical and non-classical interpretations given to logical connectives like “negation” shows different logical capacities to theorize the extension of the predicate “truth”. This would lead to the logical inability to express the incompatibility between Darwinism and creationism that arises when we have no categories or ideal representations to represent the “distinction between Darwinism and creationism” as a rule without contradictory instances.

It is necessary to explain the nature of this ability to idealize or unify the manifold (the apperceptive representation), because:

1. It is now clear that there is not just *one way* (one semantic method) to determine the *ideal position* in which a proposition is asserted only under the conditions in which that assertion cannot be canceled (under conditions in which that assertion is an instance of Tarski's T-scheme “p' is true iff p”).
2. Different metaphysical beliefs about counterfactuals and ideal objects (different versions of the meaning of negation) will give different versions of truth, and different conceptual routes towards intuition (non-classical logics presents a challenge to the premise that there is categorial or essential-ideal forms of intuitional correlation).
3. Different versions of the anti-extension of truth, determined by our choice of semantic encoding of the “negation” connective, generate different versions of the non-agreement between a proposition “p” and non-(non-“p”), and thus represent different ways of proving that proposition, and by extension, different encodings of the apperception that represents that proof as truth or justified judgment.

These difficulties show that speaking “is” alone to characterize the propositional content of “p” does not exhaust all the ways in which a proposition “p” can be negated or it does not exhaust how can we introduce that proposition into a debate. Kant's pursuit of an objective understanding of judgment's content can only be successful within an anti-realist framework, where the solutions to this understanding are not fixed materially. Therefore, the objective theory of judgment can only thrive as transcendental idealism. Determining the truth of “p” offers multiple

alternatives, highlighting the flexibility in semantic interpretation and the divergence in representing intuition and concepts. In extreme cases, this can lead to incompatible conceptual frameworks and distinct scientific paradigms, even if they represent the same material reality (as they establish the connection between proof and truth through different mental pathways).

### Transcendental Idealism as the proper content of an understanding of the “real” protected from ideological and naturalistic appropriations

This article is a contribution to the ongoing, and never exhausted, discussion on the scope of Kant’s argument against a metaphysical realism and, at once, against a type of idealism (*Critique of pure reason*), to underline the lines we allied with, and offer reasons to refuse others’ lines.

We started the article trying to account for a known tension in Kant’s work, the tension between two aspects:

1. Kant’s success in proving the difference between appearances and phenomena, conditioning the synthetic rules that govern the former to the need for *a priori* rules governing the latter (the transcendental argument for realism).
2. Kant’s insistence that we cannot be realists metaphysically, that is, we do not know external things (the transcendental argument for Idealism).

This article’s first task is just the justification of that tension between realism and idealism that seems irreconcilable within the Kantian system. As the tension appears within Kant’s work directly and expressively, explaining it is nothing more than trying to give voice to what Kant intended to inaugurate with this “in-between” position. Every time we try to give content to what can be learned from a transcendental denial of reality, however, we are faced with challenges: we seem to attack a version of reality constructed by philosophers, or we accept an anodyne, formal, merely empirical version of reality; or, again, we reduce philosophy and

idealism to a therapeutic meta-position, whose operation is reduced to diagnosing pseudo-propositions.

Given the nature of our article, we are compelled to explore an alternative perspective. We propose that the success of the Critique's message, specifically its ability to teach something about the history of philosophy, does not rely on proving realism. It is not contingent upon establishing a strong realist thesis. However, in order to avoid adopting an anti-realist stance, we must now consider the possibility that there is another way to acknowledge this success. We posit that the refutation of skepticism and the message of Transcendental Idealism can be achieved by exposing its transcendental position within the realm of conflict. It is crucial to demonstrate that this transcendental position is dialectical or a fallacy of pure reason. The aim is not to defend realism, but rather to uphold the supremacy of reason against naive representations of reality.

To those who fail to grasp the gravity of transcendental fallacies and the detrimental nature of naive perspectives on reality, the lesson of Transcendental Idealism may appear insignificant. However, it is crucial to recognize that both the natural inclinations of scientists and common sense, as well as the unfounded speculations of metaphysicians and mystics, can contribute to these fallacies. The significance of the Kantian argument lies in the belief that our era can still appreciate its importance. The continued relevance of the critical argument in contemporary philosophical discourse relies on our ability to acknowledge the "problem of reality". Moreover, it is imperative to avoid falling into the traps of skepticism and relativism, which further complicate the understanding of reality.

This raises the question of whether Kant supports the pragmatic aspect of the philosophical shifts that occurred in the last century. The development of philosophy in the Kantian perspective implies that philosophy have relinquished their previous inclination in favor of faithfully representing the world and the essence of things. This shift is due to the practical realization of the hermeneutic incommensurability between different areas of theoretical discourse. Therefore, philosophy and logic are faced with the challenge of adapting all knowledge to meet the

evolving demands of consciousness, specifically aligning the parameters of proof with the applicable theories of truth for human finite judgment.

The theory of transcendental apperception serves as one such theory, establishing the conditions under which a proposition's truth can be determined by finding a suitable intuition. However, this only holds true if the problem of truth and our perspective on it are not merely fabricated artificially or employing a non-discursive kind of intuitive representation, but rather can be represented through a higher synthesis or apperception.

From the perspective of the heritage of transcendental idealism, philosophy serves not only as a critical evaluator of dialectics and scholastic metaphysics, but also as a constant examiner of fixed theoretical constructs. It scrutinizes and challenges logical representations that artificially link evidence with truth, under the influence of dogmatic pressure. These constructs are considered fixed because they have lost touch with the radicality of practical interest in validating their foundational paradigms. Consequently, they resort to invoking classical dogmas like logical bipolarity to assert proofs that lack epistemic justification.

Kant vehemently opposes this anti-epistemic realism, which remains a primary adversary to his idealist project. Realist interpretations of empirical science and other forms of naturalism are seen as the ultimate foes, as they hinder the idealist project's mission to uncover the problematic nature of reality and truth. This mission aims to challenge any static perception of the "possible" or any version thereof that is constrained by what is commonly referred to as "actual reality". By doing this, it hinders the acceptance of reality as an unchangeable destiny. It promotes the spontaneous and conceptual emergence of perspectives and categorical boundaries envisioned by humanity.

## Conclusion

Kant's questioning of metaphysics is primarily a questioning of a version of the idea of reality, namely the "real" as conceived in purely intellectual terms, in forms of study or access that exceed our capacity to represent a proof or intuitive evidence for that concept. Kantian

anti-realism, therefore, contains no concession to skepticism: the author merely challenges ideological or static ways of thinking about reality and puts in their place the need for finite human parameters to align what can be known within the limits of what can be proven, i.e., what is thought in a judgment or in an account of the unity of an apperception.

The part of the theory responsible for formally linking concepts and intuitions thus becomes more complex. This complexity manifests itself in the form of challenges and problems that are different from those of set theory or truth function theory. The challenge involves not only any artificial way of pairing representations, like one would do in empirical association or in imaginative reproduction.

In the A edition of the “Deduction”, Kant shows that we need more than this. Apperception is the third element of this triad and the one that meets the challenge of finding objective knowledge and normative knowledge of truth-assignment. Since we can develop different strategies of correlation and proof, apperception must be seen as the highest on the scale of objective figurations: the one in which we represent not only the contingent possibility of the connection, but rather the counterfactual conditions under which that connection *would still be true*. *That is* the fixed condition under which to represent the objective reality of that connection in imagination (or other schematic representations) reproduces everything it specifies and excludes in the region of its possible intuitions.

In another words, apperception represents the “problem of truth” for “p” as a unified route of proof for “p”, the most economical or logical route to prove “p”. Therefore, the objective reality of the apperceptive representation works in ideal grounds; it idealizes the intentional correlation as a ideal maximization of the compatibility of a pure concept and all its possible models.

Kant's thesis must be regarded as non-realistic in its roots. Only if we think about the representation of the objectivity of judgment in ideal terms is it possible to measure the unification of the ways of access to truth, however diverse they may be.

Kantian anti-realism also belongs to the same line of thinking about the necessity of non-classical logical principles to delineate the framework of representable truth possibilities for the justification of assertions and the reasoning of judgments. On this view, the account of the difference between “p” and non-“p” is not fixed and does not depend on a *de re* conception of this incompatibility. There is more than one way to represent the opposition between “p” and non-“p”, depending on the epistemic stage of presuppositions and basic knowledge underlying the *a priori* representation of this difference, or depending on transcendental or categorical foundations to represent it in a possible experience. There are different models for framing the incompatibility of “p” and non-p, as well as to represent the identity of “p” and not-non-“p”.

The path to truth can also be constructed intuitively in different ways, in the sense that occurrences of judgments (or theoretical understandings of why a proposition is true) are codified in the categories of the target scientific system. As a result, this system is designed to be able to express logically (i.e. by interpreting the logical connectives of negation and implication) its capabilities to defend itself against opposing systems, only if its able to represent his own parameters for solutions for the problem “is ‘p’ true?”. Any supersensible parameter or *de re* perspective will be a dogmatic response to this problem—at dialectical cost.

Kant’s understanding of the “reality problem” does not aim to offer simplistic skeptical responses. He views reality as an aspect that we continuously question in order to maintain the significance of human perception when reevaluating our ontological perspectives. Kant does not perceive the “real” as a characteristic or principle that disregards the “unreal”. In other words, he does not consider it as something that can be easily identified in a naive, ideological debate about which aspects of human experience, language, or symbolism are superior or more capable of representing reality. The transcendental-idealist examination of reality serves as a constant vigilance against any attempt to manipulate the concept of reality itself, specifically, the suprasensible form of envisioning the real, and exploit it in support of any rhetoric, whether religious, ideological, naturalistic, and so on.

Our interpretation suggests that not only Kant's proposition regarding human limitations, but also any ideological proposition concerning the problem of judgment and its potential resolution, is unfairly selective. It pre-determines what will be deemed significant, knowable, non-pseudoscientific, expressible, and so forth. This type of pre-selection unjustly excludes the realm of historical consciousness from the adaptable parameters of plausibility (or models of scientific reasoning) and imposes rigid (often discriminatory) boundaries on epistemology and other related forms of investigation into the conditions of evidence and meaning, such as semantics.