

KANT: ORIENTATION AND *FREMDE VERNUNFT*¹

Kant: orientação e *fremde Vernunft*

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Abstract: This article aims to investigate the notion of orientation in Kant, in a context that brings together other concepts also important to his philosophy, i.e., the notion of *fremde Vernunft* (reason of others), autonomy and *Aufklärung*, dividing the text into four parts: a) constructing a panorama of the concept of orientation in the critical writings of Kant, indicating the semantics of its occurrences and its insertion into the critical programme; b) analysing the significance and the function of the notion of *fremde Vernunft*; c) explaining the close relationship between orientation and *fremde Vernunft*; and d) relating the notions of orientation and *fremde Vernunft* within *Aufklärung*.

Keywords: orientation; *fremde Vernunft*; autonomy; *Aufklärung*.

Resumo: O objetivo do artigo é investigar o conceito de orientação em Kant, numa constelação que congrega outros conceitos também caros à sua filosofia, vale dizer, a noção de *fremde Vernunft* (razão alheia), autonomia e *Aufklärung*, dividindo o texto em quatro partes: a) estruturar um panorama do conceito de orientação nos escritos críticos de Kant, indicando a semântica das ocorrências, sua inserção no programa crítico; b) analisar o significado e a função da noção de *fremde Vernunft*; c) explicar a estreita relação entre orientar-se e *fremde Vernunft*; e d) relacionar as noções de Orientar-se e *fremde Vernunft* no interior da *Aufklärung*.

Palavras-chave: orientação; *fremde Vernunft*; autonomia; *Aufklärung*.

1. Introduction

Kant did not concern himself with formulating a concept of orientation in the sense of attributing to it some privileged theoretical status. Nonetheless, in 1786, he published a text entitled “Was heißt: sich im Denken orientiren?” that explains his position on the controversy that involved Mendelssohn and Jacobi regarding Spinozism, as discussed below, whose conflict, at its core, unfolded as a clash between faith and reason. Orienting oneself occurs always “durch einen subjectiven Unterscheidungsgrund” (*WDO* VIII: 135), that is, orienting ourselves *in, by means of,*

¹ This research is an integral but an initial part of a larger project on functionalist structures of normativity that I have been developing since March 2019 and will unfold over the next two years, whose theoretical framework is much more the elaboration of formal aspects of practical life – especially normativity with some political developments – and less the substantive horizon of their definitions. The insertion of the notion of ‘*fremde Vernunft*’ in Kant is an initial part of the research, but other authors will also be listed as Nietzsche and Luhmann, as well as the debate around contemporary metaethics.

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relative to, or *towards* something, unless we have to orient ourselves *according to/in conformance with* that something. Arising from the “Gefühl des der Vernunft eigenen Bedürfnisses” (WDO VIII: 136) to admit a supreme being—in this case, God— ‘im Denken zu orientiren’ means to be determined to progress in the moral experience through the admission of God as a heuristic principle, in view of the “Unzulänglichkeit der objectiven Principien der Vernunft” (WDO VIII: 136, Anm.), an orientation that engages in this pursuit, without transforming rational faith into a knowledge of the supersensible.

The problem arises, however, not only when we want to judge matters that orbit the subjective sphere, by means of a subjective principle of differentiation, but especially when “*urtheilen müssen*” (WDO VIII: 139), that is, when we have to orient ourselves in a specific decision-making situation taking into account two aspects: first, the inobservance or incommensurability of the motivations of the judgements and actions of others toward us and vice versa; and second, the impossibility of a determinant judgement to support such judgements and actions.

Kant considers the attack on reason to be harmful — particularly from Jacobi — in favour of an exalted intuitive faith, indicating the inexorable march toward prejudice and superstition that could result from that debate. His longing for orientation is connected, in this case, as a “heuristic” resource — the term Kant employed is “*heuristische Methode*” (WDO VIII: 133)³ — that must protect freedom of thought in an enlightened space, in the sense that we communicate our thoughts to others and others communicate theirs to us. Nevertheless, this judgement is neither objectively grounded nor communicated in such a way that it can be given itself to the observation of the reasons of judgement for all. Thus, orienting oneself in thinking comes from the uncertainty of subjective judgement that, heuristically, may require its validation as soon as we make use of the notion of *fremde Vernunft* (reason of others). This is the case because orienting oneself is truly orienting oneself in thinking by means of a subjective principle of differentiation. However, it also means to orient oneself in a

³ On the notion of heuristic by Kant, cf. Loparic, Z. “Heurística kantiana”. In: *Cadernos de História e Filosofia da Ciência*, n. 5, Campinas: CLE Unicamp, 1983. The references to Kant’s works follow the records of *Kants gesammelte Schriften* (KGS), *Akademie der Wissenschaften*, whose abbreviations of the works cited here are: WDO: Was heißt: sich im Denken orientieren?; KrV: Kritik der reinen Vernunft; KU: Kritik der Urteilkraft; Log: Logik.

determined space — the public use of reason — communicating judgements and thoughts to others, whose decisions are not and cannot be determined *a priori*.

Orienting oneself is orienting oneself in thinking but also in the world (enlightened) with others. *Fremde Vernunft* exercises the role of the principle of differentiation *by means of which* we regulate our judgements to avoid the “error in general” and strengthen them, without attempting to give them an objective character *a priori*. Orienting oneself and *fremde Vernunft* are both “heuristische Methode zu denken” (*WDO* VIII: 133) that are closely interconnected to solve the problem of both the incommensurability of the motivations of others and the objective validity of judgements and actions.

The horizon of orientation and of *fremde Vernunft* also exercises, at the same time, the function of increasing the possibilities of the autonomy/*Aufklärung* pair, which we immediately associate with the three great maxims of the Enlightenment: 1) to think for oneself; 2) to put oneself in thought in the place or point of view of another, and 3) always to think consistently. The first maxim is the motto of the Enlightenment (also cited at the end of “Was heißt: sich im Denken orientieren”), the second exercises the function of *fremde Vernunft* (to imagine oneself in the place of another or by means of the reason of others), and the third intensifies one’s own judgements by increasing autonomy even more because *fremde Vernunft* is not determinative of a judgement but instead is the magnifying glass through which one must operationalise a decision.

2. Brief context of the appearance of “Was heißt: sich im Denken orientieren?”⁴

In October 1786, in the *Berlinische Monatsschrift*, Kant published his essay entitled “Was heißt: sich im Denken orientieren” (*What does it mean to orient oneself in thinking?*) on the occasion of the famous debate that involved the well-known Jewish illuminist Mendelssohn and the bellicose (and Christian) Jacobi⁵, a conflict that was known in 1783 as *Spinozastreit*, or the pantheism controversy.⁶ Roughly speaking, the debate began to unfold after the death of Lessing (in 1781), an important figure in the German cultural scene since the mid-eighteenth century, once he confessed in his final

⁴ For this discussion, cf. Irritz, G. *Kant Handbuch*. Stuttgart/Weimar; Metzler Verlag, 2010. pp. 419-422.

⁵ The debates can now be revisited online at the following website: http://www.ub.uni-bielefeld.de/diglib/Berlinische_Monatsschrift/

⁶ For a more detailed discussion on the controversy, cf. Stegmaier, W. *Philosophie der Orientierung*. Berlin/New York: Walter de Gruyter, 2008. pp. 63-77.

days to being a sort of spiritual heir to the philosophy of Spinoza. Everything would be fine were it not for the belief within intellectual circles that Spinozism was precisely the one philosophy that culminated in fatalism, in radical pantheism and especially in strong tendencies toward nihilism.

On one side is Mendelssohn, the cosmopolitan and intellectual son of Lessing and his Spinozism, who published in 1785 the *Morgenstunden*, and on the other is Jacobi, the rabid Christian who published almost at the same time his *On the Doctrine of Spinoza in Letters to Mr. Moses Mendelssohn*. Mendelssohn situates Spinoza via Lessing by means of a purified pantheism, but he situates himself at the side of “*sound reason*”; however, he is heavily criticised by Jacobi and even accused of atheism. The main quarrel refers to the way in which God is introduced in philosophical reflection, from Spinoza to Fichte, such that Jacobi was not only a critic of Mendelssohn’s Spinozism but also of all the criticism and idealism that “*advocates the most open atheism and nihilism*”.⁷ Even the relationship between Jacobi and Spinoza is ambiguous because he defends the initial bases of Spinozism, but then rejects them to support his own positions. In this case, Spinoza would have correctly explained that the best path for understanding the Absolute is original intuition. However, he would have been the victim of metaphysical tradition in that he shifts the notion of ‘adequate knowledge’ — also to the path of rigorous reflection — as the way to effectively know such an Absolute, for example, through the concept of substance. To know the substance, then, presupposes we employ an analysis of concepts and the necessary connections between them, so that we form other concepts until we arrive at the Absolute, in other words, of the knowledge of the modes of substance, of the necessary connections between the perceptions of the modes, of the concepts formed from these perceptions and of the other concepts formed from such concepts, up to the Substance. The result is that the Substance is a concept of such an abstract nature that the distance from the real is practically abysmal, and thus it becomes an empty concept and a falsifier of its own reality. In summary, God as Substance in Spinoza is the concept most removed from the real; thus, it does not represent reality at all, nor does it explain anything about God. Moreover, if Substance acts in all its modes in the real, then there is no God in the world because this is an empty concept that represents nothing. Thus, Spinozism moves

⁷ Arendt, D. *Nihilismus. Die Anfänge von Jacobi bis Nietzsche*. Köln: Hegner, 1970. pp. 335s.

toward nihilism of the world in that it converts the world, according to Jacobi, into something with the value of nothing. Jacobi's position is exactly the reaffirmation of faith as original intellection of God as well as an intuitive grasp of reality, relegating the products of reason and rationalisation to the background.⁸ Evidently, Jacobi's attacks intended to go beyond the debate with the Jewish illuminist, aiming to ultimately reach the spiritual substrate of all German *Aufklärung*.

It is curious to note that the debate between Mendelssohn and Jacobi, at its core, expressed a conflict between faith and reason, part of a larger problem in Germany in the mid-eighteenth century regarding a crisis that unfolded between intuition and reflection and between immediate experience and reconstructed experience. Not only does Kant take part in the conflict between Mendelssohn and Jacobi, but his critical programme must also be understood as a theoretical and engaged contribution with the two main theoretical problems of his time, i.e., a contribution that tried to reframe and reposition the relationship between intuition and representation. This is the general context into which the essay *What does it mean to orient oneself in thinking?* was published, a text with which Kant positions himself specifically in the debate between the two characters and that, at its core, makes a theoretical contribution to the conflict between faith and reason.

Kant does not side with either of the characters but rather is much more interested, so Kant, “manche heuristische Methode zu denken“ that „in dem Erfahrungsgebrauche unseres Verstandes und der Vernunft vielleicht noch verborgen [liegt], welche, wenn wir sie behutsam aus jener Erfahrung herauszuziehen verständen, die Philosophie wohl mit mancher nützlichen Maxime selbst im abstracten Denken bereichern könnte.“ (*WDO* VIII: 133) On this point, I wish to bring attention to the expression ‘*heuristic methods*’ because it is precisely on this horizon that the notion of orientation will be inserted.

3. Kant's yearning for orientation

The Kantian yearning for orientation refers to the “Maxime der Nothwendigkeit, im speculative Gebrauche der Vernunft [...] sich zu orientiren” (*WDO* VIII: 133), such that orientation is, in Kant's case, orientation in thinking. The need to orient oneself is

⁸ On this topic, cf. Giovanni, G. Os primeiros vinte anos de crítica: a conexão Espinosa. In: Guyer, P. (org.) *Kant*. Aparecida: Ideias & Letras, 2009. pp. 499-535.

intensified when, in matters of the supersensible, Kant distances himself both from the theoretical use of the understanding, according to which the rational being is capable of providing concepts that determine a particular object, as well as the practical use of reason, insofar as it represents *a priori* the law to imperatively appear to us. If Kant considers the controversy harmful (*verderblich*) to the “Macht des speculativen Vernunftgebrauchs in Sachen der Theologie”,— an indirect allusion to Mendelssohn — he equally wants to distance himself from “ein vorgeblicher geheimer Wahrheitssinn [...] [eine] überschwengliche Anschauung unter dem Namen des Glaubens“ — an indirect allusion to Jacobi. Simultaneously, however, he needs to recognise the very edge of reason and reject (*wegfallen*) “der hohe Anspruch des speculativen Vermögens derselben, vornehmlich ihr allein gebietendes Ansehen (durch Demonstration)“. Thus, having to address purely subjective judgements precisely implies having to find "heuristic" methods of thinking, and, for this task, Kant concludes: “Der erweiterte und genauer bestimmte Begriff des Sichorientirens kann uns behülflich sein, die Maxime der gesunden Vernunft in ihren Bearbeitungen zur Erkenntniß übersinnlicher Gegenstände deutlich darzustellen.“ (*WDO VIII: 134*)

We are always already in situations of orientation because the act of orienting oneself always occurs in concrete situations. In this case, orienting oneself is always orienting oneself *in, by means of, towards, or relative to* something, unless we have to orient ourselves *according to/in conformance with* that something. Orienting oneself always occurs by means of a point of reference, or through a mechanism of differentiation, in which the element of differentiation always exercises equally the function of the point of reference without conditioning or determining one’s action. About this, Kant wrote: “Sich orientiren heißt in der eigentlichen Bedeutung des Worts: aus einer gegebenen Weltgegend (in deren vier wir den Horizont eintheilen) die übrigen, namentlich den Ausgang zu finden.“ (*WDO VIII: 134*) In other words: we are always already oriented because we are already always leaving from a “given region”, meaning that orienting oneself always occurs in specific decision-making situations so that by way of that “given region”, others are found. The reference to a “given region” is thus the element of differentiation or that through which any orientation is possible.

Kant outlines three forms of orientation, and in each one of these, he thinks back to the mechanism of differentiation extrinsic to the subject: 1) “orientire ich mich

geographisch“ to find certain positions: “zu diesem Behuf bedarf ich aber durchaus das Gefühl eines Unterschiedes an meinem eigenen Subject, nämlich der rechten und linken Hand”, i.e., it is a geographic orientation “nur durch einen subjectiven Unterscheidungsgrund“ (WDO VIII: 135); 2) It is possible to broaden this geographic concept of orientation and thus understand it “in einem gegebenen Raum überhaupt [...]”. The condition for spatial orientation is equally “a principle of *subjective* differentiation” (WDO VIII: 135); finally, 3) The third form of orienting oneself is the broadest and means precisely “überhaupt im Denken, d. i. logisch, zu orientiren”, the capacity of which to judge “alsdann gar nicht mehr im Stande ist, nach objectiven Gründen der Erkenntniß, sondern lediglich nach einem subjectiven Unterscheidungsgrunde in der Bestimmung ihres eigenen Urtheilsvermögens ihre Urtheile unter eine bestimmte Maxime zu bringen.“ (WDO VIII: 136) I’d like call attention not only to the principle of differentiation (*Unterscheidungsgrunde*) but also to the inability of objective judgement as the indication that we are in the reflexive jurisdiction and not determinative of judgement. Kant inserts a note in this part of the text that concludes this aspect: “Sich im Denken überhaupt orientiren, heißt also: sich bei der Unzulänglichkeit der objectiven Principien der Vernunft im Fürwahrhalten nach einem subjectiven Princip derselben bestimmen.“ (WDO VIII: 136, Anm.)

In the case of orientation of thinking, the subjective principle of differentiation originates from a feeling of “*Recht des Bedürfnisses* der Vernunft“ and consists “als eines subjectiven Grundes etwas vorauszusetzen und anzunehmen, was sie durch objective Gründe zu wissen sich nicht anmaßen darf“ (WDO VIII: 137), that is to say to admit an „ersten Urwesen, als oberster Intelligenz“ (WDO VIII: 137). Beyond a knowledge, therefore, one must operate with the very necessity of reason — God — which must be considered, however, in a dual manner, namely, in both a theoretical use with subjective validity and in a practical use as a moral hypothesis in the sense of moral conviction.⁹ In the first use, we admit to the existence of God, “wenn wir [...] *urtheilen wollen*”, but the second use (the practical necessity) is more important insofar as we admit such an existence not just because “wir [...] *urtheilen wollen*”, “sondern

⁹ To mention here *Kritik der reinen Vernunft* in the relationship between persuasion and conviction, Kant writes „[...] die Überzeugung ist nicht *logische*, sondern *moralische* Gewißheit, und da sie auf subjectiven Gründen (der moralischen Gesinnung) beruht, so muß ich nicht einmal sagen: *es ist* moralisch gewiß, daß ein Gott sei etc., sondern: *ich bin* moralisch gewiß etc.“ (KrV A 829/B 857)

weil wir *urtheilen müssen*.” (WDO VIII: 139). It is appropriate to briefly recall that orienting oneself is always orientation *by means of, toward, or in* something but not *according to* something; in other words, admitting a subjective principle of differentiation, even in the case of God, does not mean orienting oneself *according to* this principle in the sense of “das verbindende Ansehen der moralischen Gesetze, oder die Triebfeder zu ihrer Beobachtung abzuleiten“. (WDO VIII: 139). In this way, Kant can situate himself in a position between that of Mendelssohn and Jacobi in that he recognises the limit of objectivity in certain judgements and distances himself from a exalted intuition by faith, opting for the idea of a “*gesunde Vernunft*” called “*Vernunftglaubens*” (WDO VIII: 140). Henceforth, this rational faith¹⁰ will be defined as “Wegweiser oder Compaß, wodurch der speculative Denker sich auf seinen Vernunftstreifereien im Felde übersinnlicher Gegenstände orientiren, der Mensch von gemeiner, doch (moralisch) gesunder Vernunft aber seinen Weg sowohl in theoretischer als praktischer Absicht dem ganzen Zwecke seiner Bestimmung völlig angemessen vorzeichnen kann“ (WDO VIII: 142). Thus, despite God as a subjective principle, a certain validity can be considered through moral feeling, in which the effect on the ‘man of common reason’ is the effect of the force of the moral law on his mood.

The Kantian yearning for orientation through a subjective principle of differentiation has to be a guide, and not a subordinate mechanism, in the sense of positioning oneself in the world *according to* a supreme being. We are always in a state of orientation because we always find ourselves in a specific state of decisions by which we must guide ourselves; these decisions require using the principle of differentiation as a guide in the sense of a magnifying glass for practical action, in function of the moral feeling, insofar as the man of common reason “muß [...] nicht einmal sagen: *es ist moralisch gewiß, daß ein Gott sei etc., sondern: ich bin moralisch gewiß etc.*“ (KrV A 829 /B 857). It is denial of neither knowledge nor of rational belief for the benefit “auf die Errichtung eines andern Glaubens, den sich ein jeder nach seinem Belieben machen kann“, as was set up in the debate, in the way in which both, Kant wrote, left “aller Schwärmerei, Aberglauben, ja selbst der Atheisterei eine weite Pforte geöffnet“, so that it is not possible deny “der Vernunft [...] ihr zustehende Recht *zuerst* zu sprechen“ about the things that relate to “*übersinnliche Gegenstände*“ (WDO VIII: 143).

¹⁰ Concerning the topic of rational faith, cf. Bueno, Vera L. “Kant e o conceito de fé racional”. In: *O que nos faz pensar*, 19 (2006), pp. 61-76.

A last aspect remains still regarding the Kantian yearning for orientation, one that gives us the possibility to connect the notion of orientation with that of *fremde Vernunft* (“reason of others”). In the context of practical reason, Kant also recognises the incommensurability of certain actions¹¹ or even the impossibility to observe or to judge certain positions objectively. This means that “der reine *Vernunftglaube* [kann] durch alle natürliche Data der Vernunft und Erfahrung niemals in ein *Wissen* verwandelt werden, weil der Grund des Fürwahrhaltens hier bloß subjectiv, nämlich ein nothwendiges Bedürfniß der Vernunft, ist.“ (*WDO* VIII: 141)¹² Orienting ourselves thus supposes that our actions do have consequences for others, but the motives are always unobservable, be they ours by others or those of others by us.

We thus orient ourselves without objectivity of action and even without the ability to explain them so that orientation in this case is guided by a plausible argument. Plausible is that with which we agree spontaneously and that does not require further rationales for its justification; it is thus a self-referential argument, but inter-subjective, through the record of the *sensus communis*. In the context of practical action, when the inobservance of the motives of action of participants in a specific situation is taken into account — as the orientation in which such necessity (*Bedürfnisses der Vernunft*) of the reason is taken into account — the satisfaction of reason in its theoretical use “würde nichts anders als reine Vernunfthypothese sein, d. i. eine Meinung, die aus subjectiven

¹¹ It is in *Kritik der reinen Vernunft* (*KrV*) that Kant asks the question: “Gesetzt nun, man könnte sagen, die Vernunft habe Causalität in Ansehung der Erscheinung; könnte da wohl die Handlung derselben frei heißen, da sie im empirischen Charakter derselben (der Sinnesart) ganz genau bestimmt und nothwendig ist? Dieser ist wiederum im intelligibelen Charakter (der Denkungsart) bestimmt. Die letztere kennen wir aber nicht, sondern bezeichnen sie durch Erscheinungen, welche eigentlich nur die Sinnesart (empirischen Charakter) unmittelbar zu erkennen geben.“ (*KrV* A 551/B 579) Kant adds a footnote and concludes with the unfathomable character of actions: “Die eigentliche Moralität der Handlungen (Verdienst und Schuld) bleibt uns daher, selbst die unseres eigenen Verhaltens, gänzlich verborgen. Unsere Zurechnungen können nur auf den empirischen Charakter bezogen werden. Wie viel aber davon reine Wirkung der Freiheit, wie viel der bloßen Natur und dem unverschuldeten Fehler des Temperaments oder dessen glücklicher Beschaffenheit (*merito fortunae*) zuzuschreiben sei, kann niemand ergründen und daher auch nicht nach völliger Gerechtigkeit richten.“ (*KrV* A 551/B 579 Anm.)

¹² Still to mention *Kritik der reinen Vernunft*, regarding the relationship between faith and subjective validity of judgment, Kant writes: „Das einzige Bedenkliche, das sich hiebei findet, ist, daß sich dieser Vernunftglaube auf die Voraussetzung moralischer Gesinnungen gründet. Gehn wir davon ab und nehmen einen, der in Ansehung sittlicher Gesetze gänzlich gleichgültig wäre, so wird die Frage, welche die Vernunft aufwirft, bloß eine Aufgabe für die Speculation und kann alsdann zwar noch mit starken Gründen aus der Analogie, aber nicht mit solchen, denen sich die hartnäckigste Zweifelsucht ergeben müßte, unterstützt werden.“ (*KrV* A 830/B 858). In addition, cf. Pasternack, L. *Kant on Religion within the Boundaries of Mere Reason*. London/New York: Routledge Philosophy Guidebook, 2014, and Chignell, A.; Dole, A. *God and the Ethics of Belief: New Essays in Philosophy of Religion*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005.

Gründen zum Fürwahrhalten zureichend wäre“ (*WDO* VIII: 141), or as Kant writes, an orientation that is “wenigstens tauglich zum Erfahrungsgebrauche unserer Vernunft” (*WDO* VIII: 136s.). Now, reason requires certain orientations in the world, but it is not in the hands of reason to offer inflated-objective validity to the actions, without that form of judgement being inferior “dem Grade nach keinem Wissen, ob es gleich der Art nach davon völlig unterschieden ist.“ (*WDO* VIII: 141)

To the Kantian yearning for orientation, one adds, therefore, both the fact that the motives of the actions of a reason of others are unobservable to us¹³ — maybe even the motives of actions to the agent himself or herself? — and also the convenience or plausibility of the communication of the judgements themselves.

It is not our objective here to conceptually discuss the concept of rational faith elaborated in *What does it mean to orient oneself in thinking?* but to emphasise only these two aspects: on one hand, the fact that Kant departs from the inobservance of reason of others in the scope of practical reason and, on the other hand, the plausibility of the communication of a judgement, even if reason cannot objectively determine its validity. Orienting oneself in thinking is to admit, due to a necessity of reason, a subjective principle of differentiation *relative to which* (but not *in accordance with which*) we decide while simultaneously recognising the uncertainty of the validity of judgement due to the inobservance of both my judgements toward others and the judgement of others toward me.

4. Orientation and *fremde Vernunft*

Orienting oneself is always orienting oneself by means of a subjective principle of differentiation, although the concept of orientation indicates the suspension of inflated-objective validity of any judgement. However, as we saw, the practical use of the necessity of reason gains full importance because “*we have to judge*”. In other words, we must take a position in some form to think consistently and coherently with ourselves.

For the practical use, however, Kant invites us to find ‘many *heuristic* methods of thinking’, as I wrote above, and among these is that which I make use of in this point

¹³ For a more in-depth analysis of the unfathomable character of actions, cf. Pavão, A. “O caráter insondável das ações morais em Kant”. In: *Trans/Form/Ação* 30(1) (2007) pp. 101-113.

— the notion of *fremde Vernunft*¹⁴ understood as a heuristic regulatory mechanism through which we can consistently consolidate our own judgements in the public sphere. We see three ways of connecting orientation and *fremde Vernunft*: a) in *Critique of Pure Reason*, b) in the interpretation of Josef Simon, and c) in *Logic* and in the *Critique of the Power of Judgement*.

a) The chapter “The canon of pure reason” in the Transcendental Doctrine of Method discusses the topics of opinion, of science, and of faith and returns to the “reason of others” as an external touchstone by which we orient ourselves in our own judgements.¹⁵ Right at the start, Kant writes: “Das Fürwahrhalten ist eine Begebenheit in unserem Verstande, die auf objectiven Gründen beruhen mag, aber auch subjective Ursachen im Gemüthe dessen, der da urtheilt, erfordert.“ (*KrV* A 820/B 848) and he adds that such “für-wahr-halten” can be called “conviction” (*Überzeugung*), when its “ground is objectively sufficient” and valid for “every rational being”, or “persuasion” (*Überredung*), when addressing a particular character of the subject. If the conviction is objectively determined, the persuasion is reflected¹⁶, and it must resort to the use of *fremde Vernunft* in that the “touchstone” (*Probirstein*) of a judgement “ist also äußerlich die Möglichkeit, dasselbe mitzuthellen, und das Fürwahrhalten für jedes Menschen Vernunft gültig zu befinden“, because despite the “diversity of subjects” (*Verschiedenheit der Subjecte unter einander*), such a principle will rest on a common principle. (*KrV* A 820/B 848)

The Kantian effort here is equally assigning to ‘persuasion’ the character of a private valid judgement by means of appeal to *fremde Vernunft*. Let us consider a decisive excerpt in this respect: “Überredung demnach kann von der Überzeugung subjectiv zwar nicht unterschieden werden, wenn das Subject das Fürwahrhalten bloß als Erscheinung seines eigenen Gemüths vor Augen hat; der Versuch aber, den man mit den Gründen desselben, die für uns gültig sind, an anderer Verstand macht, ob sie auf **fremde Vernunft** eben dieselbe Wirkung thun, als auf die unsrige, ist doch ein, obzwar nur subjectives Mittel, zwar nicht Überzeugung zu bewirken, aber doch die bloße

¹⁴ About this notion in Kant, cf. Simon, Josef. *Die fremde Vernunft und die Sprache der Philosophie*. Berlin/New York: Walter de Gruyter, 2003.

¹⁵ Cf. Stegmaier, W.; Simon, J. (Hg.). *Fremde Vernunft: Zeichen und Interpretation IV*. Frankfurt/M: Suhrkamp, 1998, especially the “Introduction”, pp. 7-22.

¹⁶ On the relationship between reflectiv judgment e practical philosophy, Cf. Rohden, V. “Juízo e reflexão desde o ponto de vista prático”. In: *O que nos faz pensar*, 9 (1995) pp. 40-53; Marques, A. “O valor crítico do conceito de reflexão em Kant”. In: *Studia Kantiana*, v. 04, n. 1 (2002).

Privatgültigkeit des Urtheils [...] zu entdecken.“ (KrV A 821/B 849; my emphasis) I call attention to two aspects of the excerpt: first, the fact that Kant does not want to transform a subjective judgement of ‘persuasion’ into something like a determinant objective judgement but only to reiterate or to intensify the private validity of the judgement itself and, second, the fact that the mechanism for this task is the communication of the judgement to others and, in this case, to test the judgement by means of “reason of others”, not to orient oneself *according to* such *fremde Vernunft* but merely to take it as magnifying glass *by means of* which we orient and intensify our own judgement.

b) Based on Kant, it is possible to distinguish three types of orientation of philosophy regarding *fremde Vernunft*, and here I avail myself of the important distinction from the text of J. Simon, *Die fremde Vernunft und die Sprache der Philosophie* (2003): Either a) *fremde Vernunft* is “systematisch ignoriert”, becoming dogmatic as soon as it assumes a logical-egotistical meaning, or b) it is taken into account, for example, in the Platonic dialogues, to the extent that the author also takes *fremde Vernunft* as a means to express his or her own thoughts, literarily, or c) it is as in Kant, when the *fremde Vernunft* remains in its “unaufhebbaren *Dasein* bewusst und gegenwartig, aber begrifflich unbestimmt, weil der Autor nicht mehr denkt, den ihm fremden Standpunkt antizipieren zu können. (Simon, 2003, p. 9) Then, the relevance and consciousness of reason of others are observed in that the points of view of others are unobservable, i.e., unanticipatable.

I also add two specific uses for it explained within Kant’s philosophy, and here I cite Simon textually: “Kant gebraucht den Begriff einer ‚fremden Vernunft‘ in doppelter Hinsicht: Man soll die *Grunde* des eigenen Furwahrhaltens zwar an, fremder Vernunft‘ prüfen, ihr gegenüber aber dennoch, selbst denken‘. Diese beiden Einstellungen stehen zueinander in einer dialektisch-kommunikativen Beziehung.“ (Simon, 2003, p. 22). However, it is not about converting a subjective judgement into something objectively determinant but instead to consciously conserve the uncertainty of the judgement, inasmuch as certain judgements always remain subjective. However, by considering *fremde Vernunft* as a subjective principle of differentiation, we can test our judgements; in other words, we orient ourselves by means of the reason of others to intensify our own judgements consequently and consistently. *Fremde Vernunft*, then, plays the role of

the regulatory and intensifying mechanism of autonomy of its own judgements so that Kant protects the subjective dimension of judgement but also assigns to it the ability of reclaiming the private objective validity (deflated), as long as we orient ourselves by means of the reason of others as magnifying glass that regulates our own judgement.

The Kantian yearning for orientation points to the heuristic mechanism of the subjective principal of differentiation, as long as the 'necessity for reason' must admit a supreme being so that, through such a being, one can orient oneself in the world, although such a judgement of orientation always remains unobservable to others in their motivations as well as objectively unprovable to others and vice versa. However, if we now connect the heuristic resource of the *fremde Vernunft*, then it is at least possible to reclaim pretensions of validity to a subjective judgement, as long as we take the reason of others as magnifying glass, by which we orient our actions in the world. What matters, as we saw, is not *fremde Vernunft* by itself but the extent to which we orient ourselves *by means of* it as a regulatory mechanism, to intensify our own specific decisions. The recourse to *fremde Vernunft*, therefore, ends up amplifying the leeway (*Spielräume*) regarding both religious judgements and its own action.

c) In *Logic*, Kant writes that the critical proceedings, in the rigorous sense of highlighting, distinguishing, or emphasising something, is a form of avoiding error and seeking the appearance of truth, which had been the basis for a judgement. In *Logik*, as well as in section 40 of *Kritik der Urteils kraft* (KU), the resource is not terminologically to *fremde Vernunft* but to "*sensus communis*", which curiously exerts a function similar to that of *fremde Vernunft*. In *Logic*, Kant writes: "Ein äußeres Merkmal oder ein äußerer Probestein der Wahrheit ist die Vergleichung unserer eigenen mit Anderer Urtheilen, weil das Subjective nicht allen Andern auf gleiche Art beiwohnen wird, mithin der Schein dadurch erklärt werden kann." (*Log IX: 57*) Likewise, it is not about orienting oneself *according to* such judgements of others but equally considering it lens for our own judgements, "denn man kann doch vielleicht recht haben in der Sache und nur unrecht in der Manier, d. i. dem Vortrage." (*Log IX: 57*) The concept of *sensus communis* is also configured as a principle of differentiation. At the end of this paragraph, Kant connects *sensus communis* directly with the concept of orientation in the rigorous sense that we are analysing in this project: "Der gemeine Menschenverstand (*sensus communis*) ist auch an sich ein Probestein, um die Fehler

des künstlichen Verstandesgebrauchs zu entdecken. Das heißt: **sich im Denken oder im speculativen Vernunftgebrauche durch den gemeinen Verstand orientiren, wenn man den gemeinen Verstand als Probe zur Beurtheilung der Richtigkeit des speculativen gebraucht.**“ (Log IX: 57; my emphasis.)

The three analyses above aim to build the bridge that brings together orientation and *fremde Vernunft* because I emphasise that both concepts exist together. In summary: The Kantian yearning for orientation is born from the necessity of reason to allow for a supreme being as a subjective principle of differentiation, *by means of which* we orient ourselves in the world and relative to others. This orientation, however, implies that motivations for actions, both ours and of others, are always for us unobservable and, furthermore, that such orientation never gains the status of inflated-objective validity, as do determinant judgements. Orientation then gains a new dimension as soon as we *have to* judge or take positions, and in this case, *fremde Vernunft* receives the status of a principle of differentiation or a regulatory mechanism *by means of which* we orient our action to consistently intensify such positions. It is important to know now how the concepts of orientation and *fremde Vernunft* intensify the autonomy/*Aufklärung* pair.

5. The relationship between orientation/*fremde Vernunft* and the autonomy/*Aufklärung* pair

Kant's position in the debate between Mendelssohn and Jacobi represents clearly his opting for radical autonomy of the enlightened subject, and my objective in this scenario is precisely to demonstrate that the Kantian yearning for orientation ultimately further intensifies the autonomy/*Aufklärung* pair.

Kant was a radically engaged thinker insofar as, for example, his critical project falls within the debate to which we alluded earlier, regarding the distancing between language and reality or between immediate experience or reconstructed experience, that is, between reflection and intuition. The critical programme, then, has the task of distancing itself from the dogmatic seductions and undertaking “eine Aufforderung an die Vernunft, das beschwerlichste aller ihrer Geschäfte, nämlich das der Selbsterkenntniß, aufs neue zu übernehmen und einen Gerichtshof einzusetzen, der sie bei ihren gerechten Ansprüchen sichere, dagegen aber alle grundlose Anmaßungen nicht durch Machtsprüche, sondern nach ihren ewigen und unwandelbaren Gesetzen

abfertigen könne“ (*KrV* A XI), or a task that expunges preconception. Furthermore, it is a programme that Kant wanted to insert into what he called the “age of criticism”, a closely associated programme with that of *Aufklärung*: “Unser Zeitalter ist das eigentliche Zeitalter der Kritik, der sich alles unterwerfen muß. *Religion* durch ihre *Heiligkeit* und *Gesetzgebung* durch ihre *Majestät* wollen sich gemeiniglich derselben entziehen. Aber alsdann erregen sie gerechten Verdacht wider sich und können auf unverstellte Achtung nicht Anspruch machen, die die Vernunft nur demjenigen bewilligt, was ihre freie und öffentliche Prüfung hat aushalten können.“ (*KrV* A XI; Anm.) In other words, a task that expunges superstitions.

In this regard, the critical programme is already unto itself a project that executes the *Aufklärung* of the *Aufklärung* in that it questions precisely what the dogmatic philosophers hitherto did not even dare question, i.e., the very limits of reason. If rationality was considered a plumb line for a continuous dominion and deduction of the natural and the moral, Kant now is not so concerned with the results or theoretical products to be placed alongside the many other theories but with questioning what was implicit in all theories: the very jurisdiction of reason. This critical programme is therefore the Enlightenment of the Enlightenment.

However, he does not try to execute a mere attack on reason; instead, he seeks to construct his own tribunal. The text *Was heißt: sich...* ends precisely with the Kantian alert for the configuration of the polemic of the era, not only for being so harmful to reason but above all because it endangered the very “*freedom of thought*” (*Freiheit zu denken*), i.e., both to think for oneself and to make public use of reason: “Aber habt ihr auch wohl überlegt, was ihr thut, und wo es mit euren Angriffen auf die Vernunft hinaus will?“ (*WDO* VIII: 144). And thus, I connect the essay *Orient oneself* with an enlightened programme.

Kant enumerates the three threats to enlightened liberty that could result from the harmfulness of the debate between faith and reason: the danger of civil coercion, robbing from people “die Freiheit, seine Gedanken öffentlich *mitzuteilen*“; the mentoring of religion as a builder of the “*Gewissen*” (*moral conscience*) and, finally, the deterioration of freedom when this is *lost* through carelessness insofar as “wenn die Vernunft dem Gesetze nicht unterworfen sein will, das sie sich selbst giebt, sie sich unter das joch der Gesetze beugen muß, die ihr ein anderer giebt.“ (*WDO* VIII: 144s.)

The ‘march of things’, as Kant writes, is the inexorable march toward “*superstition*”, a *Leitmotiv* of *Aufklärung* and, especially, the very self-destruction of the “freedom in thought” (*Freiheit im Denken*), “wenn sie [die Vernunft – JLV] sogar unabhängig von Gesetzen der Vernunft verfahren will“ (*WDO* VIII: 146). The configuration of the debate between Mendelssohn and Jacobi took on such large proportions that Kant, once again, sees the deterioration of that very freedom, by which the simple attack on reason would become so harmful for the general context of *Aufklärung*. It is in this context that the text *Orient oneself...* must be read and inserted into the larger project of *Aufklärung* and, especially, as an integral part that protects and intensifies the guarantees of the autonomy of humankind.

Let us now, however, see how the *Aufklärung*/autonomy pair is related to the yearning for orientation, aided by *fremde Vernunft*.

To have the courage to use your own understanding, the motto of the Enlightenment, requires the freedom, “[damit] von seiner Vernunft in allen Stücken *öffentlichen Gebrauch* zu machen.“ (*WA* VIII: 36) Thus, orienting oneself is always orienting oneself in specific decision-making situations and, especially, orienting oneself with others in the way in which we communicate: “Allein wie viel und mit welcher Richtigkeit würden wir wohl *denken*, wenn wir nicht gleichsam in Gemeinschaft mit andern, denen wir unsere und die uns ihre Gedanken *mittheilen*, dächten!“ (*WDO* VIII: 144) Orienting oneself, then, is orienting oneself in a given enlightened space in which decisions are not yet defined. However, here we treat non-determinative judgements and therefore those that are subjective but that have pretension to validity, as well as to the inobservance of the motivations of others. In this case, we are always already in a determined and enlightened space, but we have to make judgements based on *fremde Vernunft* as a principle of differentiation by which we orient ourselves. For that reason, we communicate our thoughts to others and vice versa.

However, with regard to “*allgemeine Menschenvernunft*”, Kant writes, “worin ein jeder seine Stimme hat”, so we must “seine Gedanken, seine Zweifel, die man sich nicht selbst auflösen kann, öffentlich zur Beurtheilung auszustellen“ (*KrV* A 752/B 780). We always communicate our judgements to others when orienting ourselves, but the heuristic function of *fremde Vernunft* is further intensified exactly because an universal and common reason is not assumed here, i.e., Kant writes “Everyone has a

voice” (*ein jeder seine Stimme hat*). The three great maxims of the Enlightenment become closely connected with the notion of *fremde Vernunft* when considering it as a principle of differentiation that regulates the positions themselves, partly to prevent error. In *Logic*, Kant writes: “Allgemeine Regeln und Bedingungen der Vermeidung des Irrthums überhaupt sind: 1) selbst zu denken, 2) sich in der Stelle eines Andern zu denken, und 3) jederzeit mit sich selbst einstimmig zu denken.“ (*Log IX: 57*) This is the main excerpt with which I relate orientation/*fremde Vernunft* with the autonomy/*Aufklärung* pair.¹⁷

Note that the first maxim is precisely the general motto of the Enlightenment and that in which reason is never “passive”, liberating itself from the “preconception” and from “superstition” (*KU* §40). Thus, we always orient ourselves in a given space, in that we assume the posture of the public use of reason in communicating our thoughts to others and vice versa. In this case, I emphasise again that orienting oneself always occurs in concrete spaces. The era’s controversy is harmful because it gradually undermines the conditions for the exercise of autonomy, in which it is an enlightened space of the decision on and communication of judgements.¹⁸ It is in that way that the maxim recorded in *Logic* and in *Critique of the Power of Judgement* is connected to *Orient oneself*.... In the last paragraph of the essay, Kant writes: “Freunde des Menschengeschlechts und dessen, was ihm am heiligsten ist! Nehmt an, was euch nach sorgfältiger und aufrichtiger Prüfung am glaubwürdigsten scheint, es mögen nun Facta, es mögen Vernunftgründe sein; nur streitet der Vernunft nicht das, was sie zum höchsten Gut auf Erden macht, nämlich das Vorrecht ab, der letzte Probirstein der Wahrheit zu sein.“ (*WDO VIII: 146*) Here, Kant inserts a footnote that indicates the importance of “*thinking for oneself*” as “*enlightenment*”. Orienting oneself, therefore, is situated by Kant in an enlightened space in which I communicate judgements without a deflated objectivity, but as “*exemplary validity*” as Kant wrote.¹⁹

¹⁷ The strict connection regarding this excerpt can be read, Kant writes, as following: “Die Maxime des Selbstdenkens kann man die aufgeklärte; die Maxime sich in Anderer Gesichtspunkte im Denken zu versetzen, die erweiterte; und die Maxime, jederzeit mit sich selbst einstimmig zu denken, die consequente oder bündige Denkart nennen.“ (*Log IX: 57*)

¹⁸ On the subjective status of communicating in Kant, cf. Garcia, André L. “Teses sobre o estatuto subjetivo do significar e comunicar em Kant e Nietzsche”. In: *Kriterion*, 128, (2013), pp. 349-366.

¹⁹ In *Kritik der Urteilskraft* we can read: „Also ist der Gemeinsinn, von dessen Urtheil ich mein Geschmacksurtheil hier als ein Beispiel angebe und weswegen ich ihm *exemplarische* Gültigkeit beilege, eine bloße idealische Norm, unter deren Voraussetzung man ein Urtheil, welches mit ihr zusammenstimmte, und das in demselben ausgedrückte Wohlgefallen an einem Object für jedermann mit

However, to orient oneself is to assume the uncertainty of the communication of judgement, given that it is not determinant and that its motives for acting are unobservable to others. Here, the heuristic of *fremde Vernunft* appears again in the second maxim, viz., ‘to put oneself in thought in the place or point of view of another’. Here echoes the proposition according to which *fremde Vernunft* is the principal of differentiation, the means by which we test our own judgements. To communicate our own judgements is to examine by means of *fremde Vernunft* if such judgements ‘produce the same effect on the reason of others as on our own’, a heuristic means that, as I wrote above, “though only subjective, not, indeed, of producing conviction, but of detecting the merely private validity of the judgement” (cf. *KrV* A 821/B 849). Avoiding error presupposes, therefore, orienting oneself by means of a *fremde Vernunft* as “ein Probirstein, um die Fehler des künstlichen Verstandesgebrauchs zu entdecken. Das heißt: sich im Denken oder im speculativen Vernunftgebrauche durch den gemeinen Verstand orientiren, wenn man den gemeinen Verstand als Probe zur Beurtheilung der Richtigkeit des speculativen gebraucht.“ (*Log* IX: 57) It is therefore a regulatory heuristic principle for my own thoughts and therefore a procedure of those who are able to expand the possibilities for validating a judgement. This “extended manner of thinking” communicates one’s private judgements, ‘imagining oneself from the point of view of others’ (*KU* V: 295) to orient oneself *by means of* it. The second maxim, thus, is that which assumes the function of *fremde Vernunft* and effectively refers to the “Urtheilskraft”. (*KU* V: 295)

As we saw, however, orienting oneself is always orienting oneself *by means of*, *in* something, *relative to* or *towards* something but not *according to* something. The necessity of reason to admit the subjective principle of differentiation exercises the function of this “something”, but as we position ourselves and communicate our subjective judgements, *fremde Vernunft* joins the Kantian yearning for orientation by serving equally as regulatory mechanism of our judgements. In this point, the third maxim closes the cycle of the relationship with autonomy. ‘To think consistently’ implies differentiating oneself relative to the differentiating principle or to *fremde*

Recht zur Regel machen könnte: weil das Princip, zwar nur subjectiv, dennoch aber, für subjectiv-allgemein (eine jedermann nothwendige Idee) angenommen, was die Einhelligkeit verschiedener Urtheilenden betrifft, gleich einem objectiven allgemeine Beistimmung fordern könnte; wenn man nur sicher wäre, darunter richtig subsumirt zu haben.“ (*KU* V: 239)

Vernunft. Thus, because we do not orient ourselves *according to* reason of others, the maxim to think for oneself is always predominant and, in this case, we consider *fremde Vernunft* magnifying glass *by means of which* we intensify our own judgements in a regulated manner. As Kant writes, this third maxim can be achieved “nur durch die Verbindung beider ersten und nach einer zur Fertigkeit gewordenen öfteren Befolgung derselben erreicht werden.“ (KU V: 295) Therefore, orienting oneself *by means of fremde Vernunft* implies thinking for oneself, the main objective of which is, at its core, to intensify further one’s own judgements so as always to think “consistently”. This, then, is a procedure that has to return to itself; thus, ultimately, the third maximum is a way of “thinking consistently or cogently” that leads to the ultimate consequence of the wager on the autonomy of humankind, or the moment when we reiterate our autonomy to the extent that we have to think consequentially or “consistently” with ourselves.

This third maxim completes, in my view, the relationship of autonomy with enlightenment, provided that one takes to orienting oneself *by means of a fremde Vernunft* — imagining oneself in the place of another — so as ultimately to think consistently. In *Orient oneself...*, Kant aims, among other things, at the strengthening of freedom in an enlightened era. Afterwards, claiming validity for subjective judgements occurs with the orientation *by means of a fremde Vernunft* to finally to return to itself, consequently.

In summary: If the critical programme is engaged, given the subjective judgements and the yearning to orient oneself, *fremde Vernunft* assists in the further intensification of the enlightened conditions of action and judgement and further strengthens the possibility of human autonomy.

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