

A REPLY TO SERENA FELOJ ON *THE POWERS OF PURE REASON*

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I wish to thank Serena Feloj for her generous discussion of my book. I will try to answer her questions by beginning with the issue of influence. Serena asks if my interpretation of Kant is indebted to phenomenology (with regard to the dependence on givenness), and later she claims, this time without questions, that I reveal a debt to Hegel's philosophy (on the notion of form). However intriguing and fruitful I may find relating Hegel and Husserl,² there are certain discrepancies and theoretical differences in their respective views on the relation between thought and reality that are too obvious to ignore. I am not claiming that the motives of inspiration coming from these two philosophers are incompatible and thereby preempting Serena's questions of content. I am instead shifting ground and admitting that in my reading of Kant as in all my thinking I am indeed inspired by Hegel and Husserl, but not in the way one could infer if such a statement were taken at face-value. In my reading of Kant I consider Hegel and Husserl as *negative* models precisely insofar as I want to steer away from what I think is their simplification of Kant's reason. At the same time, I believe their simplification is worth keeping well in mind because it highlights certain possible reductions that start surfacing (and partly are eventually realized) in the development of Kant's philosophy. Differently stated, I take their simplification, rather than as the result of an arbitrary or fanciful reading, as the one-sided solution to a basic ambivalence regarding pure reason's powers on Kant's part.

It was only well into the writing of my book that I realized that I was often trying to rebut the main gist of Hegel's reading of Kant. In fact, after I finished the book I wrote an essay on Hegel's critique of Kant intended to complement it in which I developed a thorough and detailed analysis of the reasons why Hegel is so unsympathetic in his take on Kant.³ My intention was not that of defending Kant from Hegel's attack, but of showing the tacit presuppositions and bias at work in Hegel's reading which end up partly vitiating his criticisms.

It is because I learned from Hegel the distinction between different modes of subjectivity, and in particular between reason and consciousness or finite I, that I came to see how he conflates these distinct terms in Kant and charges him with subjectivism. It is because I learned

from Hegel the shortcomings of separation, the understanding's paramount procedure, that I came to see how he neglects the unity of reason in Kant and charges him with reducing it to the understanding, ignoring the distinction between style and content, i.e., between a dichotomic exposition and a fundamental unity to the subject-matter to analyze. It is because I learned from Hegel to value the *Transcendental Dialectic* and the difference between organism and aggregate that I find it disappointing that he should be so unfair in his assessment of reason's ideas (as opposed to the understanding's concepts) and neglect not only the *Appendix to the Dialectic* but above all the *Doctrine of Method* altogether (the Architectonic in particular being conspicuous in its absence).

I could continue along these lines, but I should turn to Serena's question on Kant and phenomenology. Here, too, I would distance myself from Husserl's partial reading of Kant, which to me is in stark contrast with all that one can learn from phenomenology, beginning with the notion of intuition and the denunciation of a sterile opposition between discursive reason's regressive analysis and a blind sensibility.⁴ Unlike Husserl who traces this opposition back to Kant, I find Husserl's discussion of its limits consonant with, indeed even inspiring for, my own study of intuition in Kant (from the notion of mathematical construction as a method that transcendental philosophy either strives to imitate or stay away from to the notion of exhibition *in concreto* [*Darstellung*] to the emphasis on the relative independence of intuition, which as many reviewers have correctly perceived puts me at odds with contemporary conceptualist readings). To be honest, however, I would hasten to point out that rather than the *Sixth Logical Investigation, Ideas I or Experience and Judgment* (or Heidegger's *Logik. Die Frage nach der Wahrheit*) – texts I find important and brilliant – the heart of this concern for me stems from years of study of the exegetical tradition of commentaries on Aristotle's intellect and of the history of imagination and mathematics.

Incidentally, Serena is right in finding a parallelism between Kant's reason as organism and the teleology stressed by Hegel in the Preface to the *Phenomenology*, except that – regrettably, once again – Hegel would not agree. Another sign of what I take to be a missed opportunity for a fair discussion of Kant's reason on Hegel's part is the fact that as he there defines reason as a purposive activity (*ein zweckmässiges Tun*) he ascribes this thought to Aristotle *in contrast with* Kant's reason, which Hegel thinks is powerless and finite inasmuch as he has reduced it to the understanding.

I find it instead difficult to see how Serena's suggestion to include Kant's notion of force as yet another way to highlight a purposive reason can be viable. In the *First Metaphysical Principles of a Science of Nature* Kant uses force in the Mechanics to denote corporeal nature, after the discussion of attractive and repulsive forces in matter in the Dynamics. If force is invoked to explain external causality in material movement, there cannot be any purpose or teleology to it. Unlike desire, impulse and ends, force can hardly lend itself to an analogy with reason as organism and spontaneous and free activity.

On the other hand I do not find it problematic to safeguard freedom if reason is intrinsically and necessarily embodied. Freedom is a stratified concept in Kant and has several

meanings, but it never pertains, even in its moral sense, to an incorporeal mind or a separate cogito.

Let me now come to the main point raised by Serena in the latter part of her discussion, the continuity between the regulative idea of reason in the first *Critique* and the teleological power of judgment in the third. I would certainly agree that unity of nature and unity of reason are intimately related, even though I am not sure we can speak of a logical necessity or objective validity to the rational idea of a unity of nature. What complicates the issue considerably is that the unity of nature and of the world are distinct, and while the former, qua necessary conformity to laws (*natura formaliter spectata*), is the product of the understanding (*Prolegomena* §§ 16-17, KrV B 165), only for the world is the rational idea an indispensable guidance. This is not to downplay Kant's groundbreaking notion that even empirical laws and a criterion of empirical truth are impossible without ideas, as he writes in the *Appendix to the Dialectic*, but it does tell us that in nature as a thoroughgoing unity of appearances in conformity to laws the systematic unity is that of the understanding with its rules, not of reason with its ideas.

If anything, the strength of reason's purposive activity in the *Critique of Pure Reason* lies in its complete independence of nature. Reason's teleology has nothing natural, and here lies the distance reason marks between itself and all organic model. This is why the paradigms of the architect building an edifice and of personality setting itself wholly unnatural ends integrate and correct the organic inspiration of Kant's description of reason. The lawful order of nature and the intelligible order of the world are as opposed as the understanding's rules for appearances are to the unconditional. Unlike the systematic unity of nature, reason aims at a purposive unity of things which satisfies the speculative and the practical interests of reason at once insofar as it assumes a supreme intelligence as the sole cause of the world, if in the idea only (KrV, A 687/B 715).

If this shows that the plan of an ethico-theology figuring prominently in the third Critique is by no means a late concern for Kant, it also must be added that this picture holds only up to a point. The third Critique brings to light many new themes, and as certain issues are redefined, certain others are more or less abandoned as the idea of a system of transcendental philosophy is recast over the years. In my book, especially in Chapter Three, I have followed this complex transformation, the more relevant (or, better, pertinent to Serena's discussion) aspects of which amount to this: In the third Critique purposiveness acquires central stage and becomes the a priori principle of reflection, itself guiding the search for systematic unity. Here the concept of a system of nature has no longer to do with either the understanding or reason but is the transcendental principle of the power of judgment, the "new" faculty intermediate between them. Systematicity is subordinated to formal purposiveness as one of its aspects, and reason's idea of totality is now subordinated to reflective judgment. In this new light, purposiveness comes to guide the search for systematic unity, so that the several heuristic principles guiding empirical sciences that the Appendix to the Transcendental Dialectic called the laws of homogeneity, specification, and continuity (KrV A 657-58) are no longer reason's regulative ideas but become the transcendental expression of the power of judgment facing a now particular and contingent nature replete with heterogeneous forms.

Naturally this complete transformation of the architectonic of reason's faculties upsets the general architectonic of 1781, and definitely it is hardly a misunderstanding we can blame Hegel or others for. In this sense I said at the beginning that Hegel's simplification is not a complete invention on his part, for in the third Critique Kant forgets the positive character of ideas of the first Critique and tends to dismiss its Transcendental Dialectic and Doctrine of Method much as Hegel thought. In turn, this is not itself Kant's last word, because in the *Fortschritte* the backbone of the Transcendental Analytic of the first Critique will be directive again, and in the *Opus Postumum* the ideas of God and world will return as a distinct pair in all its importance.

However it may be, this shows how radically Kant has changed the tenets of his system. And this shows the extent to which I think Serena is justified in taking the teleological power of judgment as an expression of the more general teleological nature of reason itself.

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NOTE / NOTES

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2 See my essays "Hegel and Husserl on the Emergence of the I out of Subjectivity" (Ferrarin 2016¹) and "Hegel, Husserl and Imagination" (Ferrarin forthcoming), as well as the volume I co-edited with Elisa Magri and Danilo Manca in Italian *Hegel e la fenomenologia trascendentale*, (Ferrarin – Magri - Manca 2015).

3 The essay came to constitute the fifth chapter of my subsequent book on thinking and the I in Hegel (Ferrarin 2016³, 171-239). For an excerpt in English, see my “Reason in Kant and Hegel” (Ferrarin 2016², pp. 1-15). For a brief overview in Portuguese, see my “*A Efetividade do pensar*” (Ferrarin 2015¹, pp. 326-42).

4 See my “*From the World to Philosophy, and Back*”, (Ferrarin 2015², pp. 63-92).

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