

Was Kant a naturalist? Further reflections on Rauscher's idealist meta-ethics

Darlei Dall'Agnol*

Universidade Federal de Santa Catarina (Florianópolis, Brasil)

Introduction

In his paper “Realism and anti-realism in Kant’s meta-ethics: a reply to Professor Dall’Agnol,” the North-American philosopher, Frederick Rauscher (2012), restates his idealist interpretation of Kant’s metaphysics of morals stated in previous works (Rauscher, 2002, 2006, 2009). According to Professor Rauscher’s earliest paper (2002, p. 482), Kant was a *moral idealist* because he believed that “all of the moral characteristics of the world are dependent upon the human mind.” Despite the fact that Rauscher later came (2006) close to recognizing that Kant could have been a realist by identifying a transcendental structure of practical reason that all deliberative rational beings must possess, he insisted that Kant’s failures, for instance, to prove that we, humans, are rational beings, show that he remained an idealist in meta-ethical terms. In personal conversations, in written comments on some of his unpublished works, and in my (2012b) paper, I objected to Professor Rauscher’s reading of Kant’s meta-ethical assumptions arguing that it is not clear in which sense the moral law is “dependent” upon the *human* mind and that, in fact, there are reasons for suspecting that Kant would have rejected a purely idealist meta-ethics because it is a *partial* reading of the main commitments he made in his project of a metaphysics of morals. One must just be reminded here, in analogy with the “Refutation of the Idealism,” in the *Critique of pure reason*, that transcendental philosophy shows us that both knowledge and moral action are composed of *formal* elements, constructed by rational beings like us, as well as *material* ones, which are independent of the human mind.

In his reply to my paper, Rauscher not only clarified many important issues and stressed some of the main differences we have (for example, on the interpretation of the *Faktum* of reason and the concept

* Emails: ddarlei@yahoo.com, darlei@cfh.ufsc.br

of autonomy), but also provided further arguments in defense of his initial interpretation. I am grateful to him, as you should be, for making his views clearer, and for dealing with Kant's meta-ethics, which is, I agree with him on this point, shrouded in obscurity. In this sense, Professor Rauscher made great improvements while standing by his initial idealist approach. For instance, he recognized that the moral law is independent of *human* beings, although it is not of *rational* ones. Certainly, Kant did not base morality on anthropology. For one thing, the very existence of *rational* beings, which humans are just an instantiation of, and some of their moral properties, for instance the fact that they have a special kind of value not reducible to price, namely dignity, give us (humans) *contends* for our maxims, which are independent of what we, as a species or individually, desire, believe etc.

Among all the clarifications, however, there is one which calls attention: Rauscher insists that his "... interpretation can be linked to my [his] overall project of interpreting Kant as a *metaphysical* naturalist but *methodological* anti-naturalist" (Rauscher, 2012, p. 37, italics added). Since I believe that Rauscher's interpretation of Kant's ontology may be one of the main reasons why he reconstructs the author of the *Metaphysics of morals* as an antirealist, more specifically, an idealist in meta-ethics, I will discuss this issue in this work. I do not deny that Kant is, with some qualifications, a methodological non-naturalist (I would not say "*anti-naturalist*"), but I am in real doubt as to whether he can be considered a *metaphysical* naturalist.

We do not yet know the full extension of Rauscher's project of reconstructing Kant *as* a naturalist, since he is planning to write a book on this issue, but some pieces of his work have already been published (2007; see, especially, 2009). I hope not to misrepresent Rauscher's main project. Since I believe that it is misleading to read Kant's philosophy as metaphysically naturalist, and that this ontological assumption has important implications for Rauscher's understanding of the anti-realist assumptions of Kant's meta-ethics, I will argue in this paper that Kant *is not* a naturalist in the metaphysical sense. If I succeed in this task, it will also become apparent why Kant cannot be regarded as an idealist in meta-ethics.

In the first part of the paper, then, I will maintain that Kant cannot be seen as a *metaphysical* naturalist. In the second part, I will show why Kant needs to be seen as a non-naturalist. Considering the results of these two parts, the third section of my paper will extract the main meta-ethical implications of rejecting the attribution of metaphysical naturalism to Kant's philosophy. In the fourth part, I will briefly say why

Kantians today must remain non-naturalists. Moreover, I will reply to some of Rauscher's objections to my non-idealist reading of Kant's meta-ethics.

1. In which sense (if any) can Kant be considered a naturalist?

It is not clear in which sense Rauscher says that Kant is a methodological *anti*-naturalist. To start with, then, let me distinguish clearly between metaphysical naturalism and methodological naturalism. This can be done in the following way:

(i) metaphysical naturalism is an ontological view, which asserts that there is nothing supersensible; there are just *natural* entities; thus, if there are moral facts, they are just natural ones;

(ii) methodological naturalism is a system of rules for enquiry, which could be metaphysically neutral (it is not necessarily committed to the following proposition: "Nature is all there is"), and which uses the procedures of experimental scientific method for empirical discovery and explanation of natural facts.

If we keep these definitions in mind, I believe that Kant would, looking at things from the theoretical use of pure reason, be a kind of methodological naturalist. In other terms, his transcendental philosophy is compatible with the working methods and results of modern experimental sciences such as physics, psychology, anthropology etc. But Kant is not, as we will see in the next section, a metaphysical naturalist.

Professor Rauscher, however, held that Kant is a methodological *anti*-naturalist. I would agree with this statement if he had in mind a specific kind of methodological naturalism. Thus, if we take into consideration that *metaphysics* (not the traditional dogmatic one, but Kant's own metaphysics preceded by criticism) is after all a kind of knowledge, which gives us *a priori* synthetic propositions independently of the experimental sciences, then Kant is *not* a methodological naturalist. Let me then qualify as a *Quinean view* the idea that philosophy and science are *not* methodologically distinct, that is, that they are continuous (Quine, 1980). In this sense, Kant is *not* a methodological naturalist or, if you prefer, he is even an *anti*-naturalist. To recognize this point it is sufficient to remember, for instance, the distinction between philosophy and mathematics: "*philosophical* cognition is *rational cognition* from *concepts*, mathematical cognition

that from the *construction* of concepts.” (KrV, B 741) Philosophy, then, is a distinctive kind of enquiry, which proceeds *from concepts*. Its main method is conceptual analysis. Kant wanted, after all, to establish a *metaphysics* of nature, and of morals. As Rauscher well knows, metaphysics here means “a system of *a priori* knowledge from mere concepts”. Thus, in Kant’s philosophy, metaphysics has two parts: the *metaphysics of nature*, consisting of all the *a priori* principles of our knowledge of what is and the *metaphysics of morals*, comprising all the *a priori* principles of what ought to be. Therefore, in the Quinean sense, I would agree with Professor Rauscher that Kant is an anti-naturalist. But, again, Kant is not, *pace* Rauscher, a metaphysical naturalist because he has a metaphysics of morals.

In order to realize that this is Kant’s view, we need an additional distinction. It is possible to be a methodological naturalist and either be a metaphysical naturalist or not. In other words, a methodological naturalist can be *reductivist* and, consequently, a metaphysical naturalist. That is to say, one can fully accept the working methods and results of experimental science without stating metaphysical propositions (for example, consider Kant’s “Transcendental Dialectic” main propositions: (i) there is a highest being (God) *or* there is no highest being; (ii) everything that thinks is of absolutely persistent unity and therefore distinct from all transitory material unity *or* the soul is not an immaterial unity and cannot be exempted from all transitoriness etc. etc.) This is not, however, what a reductivist does, since she holds that Nature is all there is. Let me then make some further distinctions:

- (i) *reductivist* methodological naturalism: natural sciences give us a complete ontology; this view turns out to be equivalent to metaphysical naturalism;
- (ii) *non-reductivist* methodological naturalism: natural sciences just describe empirical facts; this view does not necessarily lead to metaphysical naturalism.

Kant is a methodological naturalist, not in the Quinean sense and *not* in the reductivist sense, that is, he does not make any attempt to show that metaphysical naturalism is true. That goes beyond the limits of our theoretical pure reason. In other words, Kant is a methodological non-reductivist naturalist, and Professor Rauscher may well agree with me on this point. If this is the case, then we disagree only on semantics. If not, we have real philosophical differences, since I believe that Kant is

not a metaphysical naturalist in the sense stated above, that is, as an ontological claim about everything that exists.

Metaphysical naturalism certainly may be the right kind of ontology we can have, and perhaps Rauscher does subscribe to it, but this is not something we can find in Kant's philosophy. Now, there are different kinds of metaphysical naturalism (materialism, physicalism etc), so it is important to ask which one Rauscher attributes to Kant. To answer this question and to make things clearer, I will quote Professor Rauscher's own definition: metaphysical naturalism is

... the thesis that the only entities which exist are those required by physics to explain observations, using proper causal laws, and the only properties of entities which exist are those whose particular existence can be understood as a result of the structure of the entities required by physics. (2009, p. 142)

As can be seen, Rauscher attributes naturalism to Kant in the strong, ontological sense. More surprisingly, Rauscher is even saying that Kant is a physicalist, which involves the *reduction* of all natural phenomena to physics. Here there is potentially another disagreement since I do not think that Kant would accept this view either - as we will see in the next section.

I could argue that Kant was not a metaphysical naturalist by recalling the non-naturalistic assumptions of the moral law, that is, (i) Kant's distinction between *phenomena* and *noumena* and the dissolution of the third antinomy showing the *possibility* of freedom, a *non-natural* (spontaneous) kind of causality, in the first *Critique*, (ii) the positive conception of freedom as *autonomy*, a *non-empirical* property of a rational agent, in *Groundwork III* showing that freedom must be presupposed to justify how the Categorical Imperative (that is, autonomy) is possible and, finally, (iii) the *Faktum* of reason –the existence of the moral law–, certainly a non-natural fact (not a *Tatsache*), which is the proof that there is pure practical reason in the second *Critique* (cf. Dall'Agnol, [1997] 2012a). I will not repeat these points here. Professor Rauscher is well aware of all of them, but he still argues that Kant was a metaphysical naturalist.

I believe, however, that his interpretation of Kant as a naturalist may be missing an important point concerning the distinction between phenomena/noumena: this fundamental distinction of Kant's transcendental philosophy says that *any object* (attention, one and the same object) should be taken in a twofold meaning, namely as appearance *and* as a thing in itself (cf., KrV, B xxvii). Now,

experimental sciences such as physics deal with phenomena only, and give us empirical knowledge of the sensible world. Causal relations fulfill the entire mechanism of nature and experimental sciences describe just natural facts. Thus, if there were only phenomena, Kant would be a metaphysical naturalist *and* a determinist or fatalist since there is no place for freedom in the natural realm. In the world of physics there is only natural causality; for a physicalist, there is no morality or, if there is, it is just constituted by natural facts.

But Kant also recognizes *the reality* of noumena or things in themselves, despite the fact that we cannot know them and, consequently, he cannot be seen as a metaphysical naturalist. In his own words: “*Denn sonst würde der ungereimte Satz daraus folgen, dass Erscheinung ohne etwas wäre, was da erscheint.*” = “For otherwise there would follow the absurd proposition that there is an appearance without anything that appears.” (KrV, B xxxvi). Now, noumena are outside the realm of space and time and, therefore, outside the realm of natural sciences such as physics. Nevertheless, their reality is a condition for freedom: for considering ourselves outside the domain of pure causal relations. Thus, Kant is a non-naturalist in the metaphysical sense.

2. Kant as a non-naturalist

I hope to have shown, in the previous section, that Kant's philosophy is *compatible* with the results of the empirical sciences and that, in this sense, he can be seen as a methodological naturalist, although not in the reductivist sense, which leads to metaphysical naturalism, for instance, to physicalism. Moreover, I hope to have shown that he is not a methodological naturalist in the sense that philosophy and natural sciences are continuous since he held that there are *a priori* synthetic propositions in his metaphysics of morals, for instance, the Categorical Imperative. He is, therefore, a non-naturalist in this methodological sense as philosophy gives us a kind of knowledge unreachable by natural sciences. In this section, I will clarify further in which sense Kant needs to be seen as a non-naturalist in metaphysical terms.

To start with, we need to ask what Kant's own concept of nature is. I believe that one promising way of starting is to consider the distinction he makes in the book *Prolegomena*: the word “nature” has two senses: *formaliter* considered nature is the existence of things governed by universal causal laws; *materialiter*, is the *totality of all objects of possible experience* (*Natur also materialiter betrachtet ist der*

Inbegriff aller Gegenstände der Erfahrung) (§ 14-16, italics added). Thus, in this section, I will discuss whether Kant can be seen as a naturalist considering these senses of “nature” only.

The distinction between two senses of nature must help us to see more clearly why Kant cannot be considered a naturalist. Substantively used, the word ‘nature’ refers to *the sum total of appearances as these are in connection through an inner principle of causality* (see first Critique B 446). Thus, if we talk about the “things of nature,” then we have in mind a subsisting whole. Now, when we use ‘nature’ in this sense, we refer to everything there is. In a world in which there are only physical objects and their properties, there is no morality, and determinism would be true. Consequently, the fundamental problem for a naturalist is to show not only the possibility, but also the real status of *normativity* (what should be). This point will be developed in the last section.

Kant is certainly a non-naturalist in the material sense. In other words, he admits the reality of things outside the domain of the world of empirical experience, of the world of natural sciences such as physics. That is why Kant cannot be considered a naturalist if we keep in mind Rauscher’s definition, which stresses the reality of the physical world only, that is, the existence of things in space and time: the proper objects of all possible experience. In other words, Kant is not a physicalist. This very conclusion can be reached by another path.

According to Kant’s *Critique of judgement*, nature is a system of ends organized by a final one. In his own words:

A final end is that end which needs no other as the condition of its possibility. If the mere mechanism of nature is assumed as the basis for the explanation of its purposiveness, then one cannot ask why the things in the world exist; for on such an idealistic system, what is at issue is only the physical possibility of things (which for us to conceive of as ends would be mere sophistry, without any object); whether one assigns this form of things to chance or to blind necessity, in either case that question would be empty. (§ 83-4)

In other words, the final end of nature cannot, especially if we consider it transcendently, be explained by physics. Thus, it appears that Kant would reject Rauscher’s physicalism.

I presented, however, a broader definition of naturalism: basically, a naturalist asserts that there is nothing, but *natural facts* or *natural objects*. Thus, reality is exhausted by Nature; there is nothing supersensible, according to a naturalist. But even in this sense, Kant

needs to be seen as a non-naturalist. Let me now, then, point out that *reason* takes us apart from nature considered in the material sense. Even in the first *Critique*, it is quite clear that reason is not subject to the laws of nature; reason is a spontaneous activity. The practical implications of this idea become clear in the *Groundwork*, just as they do elsewhere: to be rational is to determine oneself to act in conformity with the representation of laws (4: 427) and, more importantly, that the natural necessity of our impulses, desires etc. is heteronomy, not autonomy (4: 447). Thus, by considering ourselves as noumena we know that our will is free and that it is a law to itself. That means: we, as rational beings, have free choice (*arbitrium liberum*) and do not belong purely to the realm of nature as other non-human animals do (*arbitrium brutum*). Therefore, Kant must to be seen as a non-naturalist since reason does not obey natural laws: it gives laws to itself freely.

How can Professor Rauscher admit only phenomena without positive noumena, the realm of freedom? How can he reject the “absurd proposition” mentioned above? I do not know because without the admission of the *noumenal reality* there is no morality. This is the only way, in Kant’s view (and he may well be wrong about that) to save the possibility of freedom, as the solution to the third antinomy showed attributing freedom to noumena and causality to phenomena, two aspects of one and the same object. Now, freedom is the necessary condition for the existence of the moral law; freedom is the *causa noumenon* of our actions which are only possible in the positive sense if there is the moral law. Actually, the moral law is a *Faktum*, although not an empirical one. Thus, free human actions are possible only under the assumption that their causes occur in *the noumenal reality* and their effect in the *phenomenal world*. No physics reaches that point, but also no empirical science can deny it. Consequently, the ontology presupposed by physics is half way to Kant’s ontology: one aspect of the object, the phenomenal one. Thus, despite Professor Rauscher’s efforts, it seems that Kant has a richer ontology including the noumenal aspect of objects. In other words, Kant is not a metaphysical naturalist subscribing to an ontology which can be provided by the empirical sciences such as physics or other experimental ones such as chemistry, biology etc. alone, which can ultimately be reduced to physicalism or “phenomenism.”

One objection could be raised here. Professor Rauscher could say that his argument is just a meta-ethical point without entering into Kant’s ontology. But first he needs to show us how transcendental idealism as a whole is compatible with metaphysical naturalism, because it is based on the fundamental distinction between phenomena/noumena. Second,

perhaps Rauscher does not think that Kant is making any ontological claims when he invokes noumena in his practical philosophy. That is to say, Professor Rauscher could argue that he is not rejecting Kant's general distinction between appearances and things in themselves, but only the thesis that the role the distinction plays in ethics is to allow us to make claims about the actual nature of things in themselves. To this, I would like to ask a very simple question: how do we make sense of the many passages in the *Critique of practical reason*, which assert the *existence* of a purpose given *a priori*, that is, an end as object of the will, namely the highest good, and all the required postulates of pure reason? In Kant's own terms:

Thus by the practical law that commands the existence of the highest good possible in a world, the possibility of those objects of pure speculative reason [freedom, immortality and God], the objective reality which the latter could not assure them, is postulated; by this the theoretical cognition of pure reason certainly receives an increment, but it consists only in this: that those concepts, otherwise problematic (merely thinkable) for it, are now declared assertorically to be concepts to which real objects (*wirklich Objekte*) belong, because practical reason unavoidably requires the existence (*Existenz*) of them for the possibility of its object, the highest good, which is absolutely necessary practically, and theoretical reason is thereby justified in assuming them. (KpV 5: 134)

As can be seen, the existence of the highest good is necessarily required by the moral law itself. Thus, according to Kant, the *existence* of freedom (*realitas noumenon*) and the postulates of immortality and God are conditions to achieve the highest good. I will return to this point later.

We should keep in mind, when we discuss whether Kant is an anti-realist in meta-ethics that his ontology is not based on metaphysical naturalism. In this way, it would be easier to admit the reality of morality, especially the existence of the moral law, which gives reality (*realitas noumenon*) to many other objects of pure practical reason. That is to say, there are many things in his practical philosophy, which are non-natural in the material sense of "nature". These elements are, for example, the spontaneity of reason, our noumenal self, the reality of freedom, the existence of the moral law, the object of practical reason and the existence of its necessary assumptions, etc. That is why we need to consider him as a non-naturalist. Let me now clarify further some of these points.

3. Naturalism and its meta-ethical implications

In this section, I would like to spell out further difficulties of considering Kant a metaphysical naturalist and to extract the meta-ethical implications of the opposite view. This amounts to saying that natural facts or entities are not the only *real* or existing things, but that the moral law, freedom and other moral concepts (for instance, the highest good) are not just fancy or pure illusions, but refer to an *objective reality*, the noumenal realm, not open to the investigation of empirical sciences. Thus, restricting myself to the *Critique of practical reason*, I will here argue that a naturalist cannot make sense of many of the assertions we find in Kant's ethics. For example, a metaphysical naturalist cannot explain the objective reality of freedom (*Freiheit wirklich ist*), the possibility of knowing it (*a priori wissen*) hence the possibility of metaphysics as a science. This allows me to reply to defenders of the idealist meta-ethics by saying that for Kant so-called moral characteristics are not just *believed, postulated or projected* (Rauscher, 2012, p. 32), but are part of his ontology, properties of the noumenal *reality*.

One of the main reasons Rauscher has for holding that Kant is a moral anti-realist is that

human beings can never prove that they are really rational agents but at best only consider themselves as such. The moral perspective on human life is assumed *but not known*, a point of view adopted for practical purposes that extends no farther than those purposes. (2012, p. 32, italics added).

Isn't Professor Rauscher after all here denying that the metaphysics of morals is a *science*, a kind of *knowledge*, although not an empirical one? If so, this is a mistake as an interpretation of Kant's philosophy, which may lead one to see his meta-ethics as purely idealistic.

It seems that one thing the naturalist does is to hold that it is only possible *to believe* that there is pure practical reason or that human beings, *considered as things in themselves*, belong to the noumenal reality. But, how then can Professor Rauscher explain this passage:

... he [a rational being] has two standpoints from which he can regard himself and *cognize* (emphasis added here) laws for the use of his powers and consequently for all his actions: *first*, insofar as he belongs to the world of sense, under laws of nature (heteronomy); *second*, as belonging

to the intelligible world, under laws which, being independent of nature, are not empirical but grounded merely in reason. (Kant, G 4: 452)

Here and elsewhere, Kant is quite clear: the moral laws are *independent of nature*. So, if we take nature, as Professor Rauscher himself does (2012, p. 37) as “the set of empirical objects and properties in space and time”, then freedom and the moral law are not open to scientific enquiry, especially not to physics; they are non-natural aspects of the one and same reality, we human beings.

We need to stress this point here: having made the distinction between phenomena and noumena to dissolve the antinomy between natural causality and freedom by showing that it is not self-contradictory to accept both as long as we attribute each to a specific aspect of an object, Kant invites us to consider ourselves in two different ways: as belonging to the natural world, but also to an unnatural one, an intelligible world, which is, for instance, a-temporal. That is one of the main lessons of *Groundwork III*. In other words, he insists that we are conscious of ourselves as noumena and, therefore, as independent of natural causations. As rational beings, we think of ourselves as free and *eo ipso* we are so. Now, Kant never denied the existence of noumena; what he denies is empirical knowledge of them based on empirical or intellectual intuitions. Thus, we cannot have *intuitions* of ourselves as free human beings, but we cannot understand Kant’s meta-ethics without a full comprehension of his ontology: freedom and nature are two aspects of the same object, and we have both features in us.

I would like, then, to press two points from now on: first, Rauscher’s denial that we cannot prove that we are rational beings; second, Rauscher’s apparent denial that there is no *practical knowledge*, but just beliefs etc. Regarding the first point, it is unclear what Professor Rauscher is expecting. The problem seems to be that he denies that the *Faktum* of reason is a special kind of proof. In the *Critique of practical reason*, however, Kant, after stating that “pure reason is practical of itself alone”, argues that “the fact just mentioned is *undeniable*.” (KpV, 5: 32, italics added). A fact is a fact, that is, a sufficient proof (not a demonstration, of course).

Regarding the second point, Professor Rauscher needs to clarify better the way he uses expressions such as “adopted for practical purposes” (see quotation above) since he seems to devalue Kant’s notion of postulates into mere beliefs. Contrary to this, there is the entire section of the second *Critique*, “Of the Postulates of Pure Practical Reason Generally,” where postulates are said not to be mere hypothesis,

certainly not theoretical dogmas too. *Postulates are, however, necessary assumptions* (see also KpV, A 24, footnote, for a clarification of Kant's use of "postulate"). In practical philosophy, they are necessary assumptions we must take for granted because of the moral law. Therefore, the object of pure practical reason, the highest good (virtue and happiness united) is real. But Kant also makes the point that the principle of morality is *not* a postulate. The existence of the moral law is *not* just a belief. Thus, the moral law requires necessary conditions: first, freedom as its *ratio essendi*; second, two assumptions (the existence of God and immortality) as necessary conditions for achieving the supreme practical object of pure reason, namely the *summum bonum*, the highest good. As Kant explains elsewhere, postulates are practical propositions containing nothing further than the assumption that we can do something if it is required that we should do it (KpV 5: 31). They are propositions, Kant goes on, concerning an *existing* thing (*ein Dasein betreffen*). In the case of moral law, the practical rule is unconditional and, therefore, we must do what it says, but also assume its necessary conditions. Thus, it seems that Professor Rauscher gives no appropriate weight to the existence of practical *knowledge* of *pure* reason, neglecting to consider that the moral law is a *a priori* synthetic proposition, a fundamental tenet of a *science* (the metaphysics of morals).

It is not possible, of course, to know *in the empirical sense* the intelligible character of our actions, that is, it is not possible to present an *intuition* corresponding to it. But that does not imply that we cannot *know* it by means of pure reason. So, in one sense, Kant's moral epistemology is non-cognitivist, but, in another sense, it is clearly cognitivist. Now, Professor Rauscher's interpretation appears to go against many passages in the second *Critique* (the word *wissen* is employed, for instance, in KpV, A 3). Thus, Professor Rauscher, by considering Kant as a naturalist, seems to imply that metaphysics is *not* a science, that is, it gives us no *a priori* knowledge, for instance, of the supreme principle of morality. In fact, it seems also to deny pure practical reason altogether since "pure reason alone is practical of itself" (*Reine Vernunft ist für sich allein praktisch...* KpV, A 56). That is a *Faktum* and its denial (or its subjective consideration only as the consciousness of the moral law) leads to skepticism or fatalism, not only to naturalism. The *Faktum* of reason is not a psychological fact, that is, the mere consciousness of the moral law. To assert that is to deny autonomy and therefore morality altogether. On this particular point, however, I believe that Professor Rauscher and I may reach an agreement since Kant says that the *Faktum* –pure reason shows itself

actually to be practical – is identical (... *ja es ihm einerlei sei* ... KpV 5: 42) to the *Faktum* of autonomy and the *Faktum* of the consciousness of freedom of the will.

In this section, then, I tried to show that Rauscher's naturalism, which is committed to the thesis that the only existing entities are those required by physics to explain observations, under proper causal laws, is half of Kant's ontology: it points only to the reality of phenomena leaving out the existing noumenal reality. This may be the reason why Professor Rauscher interprets Kant's meta-ethics as anti-realist denying reality to the moral law, to freedom, and to the entities required by the object of pure practical reason. In the next section, I will try to show the meta-ethical implications of Kantian non-naturalism.

4. Why Kantians must remain non-naturalists

In this last section, I would like to try to briefly justify why Kantians must remain non-naturalists in our age of scientificism. My argument is very simple: a naturalist cannot give a fully satisfactory account of *normativity*, one of the central problems in philosophical ethics. Moreover, I will answer some objections Professor Rauscher raised against my criticism of his idealist reading of Kant's meta-ethics.

There is no point, of course, in denying that the modern sciences have made great cognitive progress in improving our lives, and that scientists must methodologically consider us natural beings among others. There is nothing philosophically wrong with methodological non-reductivist naturalism. There is also little space for doubting that it is possible to investigate the human moral condition from the perspective of empirical sciences. Thus, one can study, for instance, moral feelings, moral deliberations and moral choices from the perspective of the natural facts they are composed of. Think of morality from the perspective of neuroethics: it is interesting to look at how our brains work when making moral decisions to learn facts about our minds. But does that help us to decide either way when we have a "moral dilemma"? To illustrate: suppose that a pregnant woman is deliberating whether to have an abortion. Many scientific disciplines can explain what is going on in her mind, in her body and so on. But what about the *moral contents* of her decision, that is, the question whether she *may* do it or *ought* not to. It seems clear that physics cannot help us regarding *normative* issues. More importantly, physics can neither tell her what to do nor justify her decision.

As many moral philosophers have argued in a Kantian vein, there is a difference *in kind* between scientific descriptions and moral prescriptions. This is the lesson we cannot forget if we take Moore's naturalistic fallacy argument seriously, which shows that moral categories cannot be reduced to natural ones (1993). To conflate nature and morality is to commit a category mistake. This is also of one Wittgenstein's main points about the irreducibility of different language games. Moral language games are composed of the grammar for *prescriptions* of actions, which presupposes intentionality, deliberations, choices and so on. Now, *descriptive* language games are the grammatical domain for the stating of facts, facts and facts. No ethics can be found in the natural domain. These two Kantian philosophers have helped us, in contemporary ethics, to avoid falling into metaphysical naturalism.

Now, if I had to justify myself as to why we should remain non-naturalists, I would say that from the normative perspective things look differently from how they look in the empirical sciences. As I said, no physics can help us to make abortion permissible or not in the first trimester or to send a murderer to prison for life or to condemn him to death penalty and so on. Ethical judgments are norms from which we, as agents, guide our deliberations, our choices, our actions. We may well have good reasons to reject many points in Kant's metaphysics of morals (e.g., his moral rigorism), but not his insistence on the independence of normativity from the empirical sciences.

The meta-ethics associated with metaphysical naturalism, either Rauscher's idealism or, for instance, the ethical naturalism of the Cornell School or Railton's reductionist naturalism, can easily be opposed to ethical supernaturalism, either of a Platonic kind or even by theological voluntarism. I am not defending one of these kinds of anti-naturalism, but since they represent opposite meta-ethical assumptions, in the end, there is just one metaphysics opposed to another metaphysics. In this regard, they are equipollent and we must suspend a final judgment. Perhaps, this is the entire spirit of Kant's Transcendental Dialectic: to oppose two world views with their incompatible conceptions of, for instance, time. Let me say then that I do agree with Kant's agnosticism on this point: we simply do not *know* whether Nature is all there is or whether there is a supersensible deity. Thus, it is clear that each meta-ethical view (for instance, meta-ethical naturalism or theological voluntarism) may be grounded on different metaphysical views of the world.

The normative implications may well be, to use Rawls's expression "the fact of reasonable pluralism" (1993, p. xvii). If this is the

case, however, we need to build up a Commonly Sharable Morality as the necessary condition for the pacific coexistence and cooperation of persons belonging to different moral systems. This would certainly be a Kantian political morality. Moreover, Kant's notion of respect for persons, as pointed out by many Kantians, would play a vital role in this morality. Caring for vulnerable individuals to become persons or to recover is another necessary condition for achieving the ends of a political morality. Here again we realize why the normativity associated with mutual respect is not reducible to or explained by physicalism: we may have different world views still arguing that we must respect persons holding a different one while expecting respect in turn. This is another reason why, in my view, a Kantian must remain a non-naturalist. I cannot, however, to fully develop this point here.

Finally, then, I will answer some of the main objections Professor Rauscher raised against my arguments showing that Kant is not a moral idealist, namely the issues surrounding autonomy. I argued against the idealist reading, holding that the existence of rational beings as ends-in-themselves, is independent of the human mind and that they must be respected as such in our maxims. According to Rauscher (2012, p. 40),

if the moral fact in question is the value of rational beings as ends in themselves, then it appears that there is a property of the objects of volition that is independent of the legislating will. The intrinsic property of rational beings as end-in-themselves, or possessors of dignity beyond all price, would make the supreme principle of morality heteronomous.

I do not understand why recognizing the intrinsic value of rational beings makes morality heteronomous. This would be the case only if one takes autonomy as subjective freedom or individual liberty. But autonomy is self-imposition of the moral law in Kant's ethics. Moreover, Rauscher's argument does not work because if there were no rational being outside ourselves, then there would be no need to universalize our maxims of action.

As I argued in my comment on Rauscher's paper, however, I do not think that a simple dichotomy "idealism/realism" can capture the richness of Kant's meta-ethics, but if it is possible to speak in terms of moral "facts" in his practical philosophy, (certainly, not in the empirical sense), then they will be facts about rationality as such, about autonomous wills in rational agents, about their special value since moral principles are rational ones and so on. Does that make Kant a realist? Not of a Platonic kind, for example, one who holds that moral characteristics are completely *independent* of rationality itself, for

instance, of a transcendent deity. Does that mean that Kant is an idealist by denying reality to morality? I do not think so. In my work, I argued for a third way.

Professor Rauscher seems to misrepresent the nature of moral concepts taking autonomy purely in terms of self-legislation. Granted, pure practical reason is completely autonomous (that is, independent) in relation to empirical determinations of the will. But it does not follow that pure practical reason *creates* rules at will or *creates* the materials of morality (for instance, the ends that are at the same time duties: one's own perfection and the happiness of others). In fact, Kant does not hold that we create morality; on the contrary, we must conform to the objective requirements of the moral law. For instance, no one is "autonomous" to take his own life because one must respect the special value persons have. This is a requirement that is independent of one's will and that is equivalent to saying that Kant was not an idealist in meta-ethical terms.

Now, to say that the moral law has objective reality (*Realität*, not the empirical one, *Wirklichkeit*) is not to conflate *is* with *ought to be*. That would be equivalent to committing the naturalistic fallacy. It is clear that pure reason has two *uses*: the speculative and the practical. The former aims at the knowledge of natural causes; the latter, action, which presupposes a special causality. I reject then the difficulty pointed out by Professor Rauscher, namely that my "reading of Kant's doctrine of the value of rational beings does not sufficiently account for the difference between theoretical and practical claims" (Rauscher, 2012, p. 39). In fact, if Kant were a metaphysical naturalist, as Professor Rauscher tries to *reconstruct* his philosophy, then there would be no place for morality and no point in distinguishing between theoretical and practical claims. Or, one would have to attribute to Kant a strong kind of moral realism, namely one holding that moral facts are just natural facts. Taking this into account, I do not think that this project would sound as Kantian or even Neo-kantian anymore.

Final remarks

In this paper, I argued against Professor Rauscher's interpretation of Kant as a metaphysical naturalist. Moreover, I distinguished several kinds of methodological naturalism and pointed out that Kant is a naturalist only in a very specific sense, but I also argued that he is not a methodological naturalist in the sense that philosophy cannot give us practical knowledge of the moral law. If my interpretation is correct,

then we have reasons to reject Professor Rauscher's idealist reading of Kant's meta-ethics, which holds that the moral law is just believed, projected or postulated by our human mind for practical purposes. In the third section, I argued that Kant needs to be seen as a non-naturalist. Finally, I tried to show why we Kantians should remain non-naturalists in ethics.

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Abstract: In this paper, I examine Rauscher's interpretation of Kant as a metaphysical naturalist and a methodological anti-naturalist. Moreover, I discuss the meta-ethical implications of considering Kant as a naturalist of some kind. I argue that Kant cannot be seen as a naturalist in the metaphysical sense, although there is a sense in which he is a methodological non-naturalist. I then point out that Rauscher's naturalist reading of Kant may be one of the main reasons he considers Kant's meta-ethics to be idealist. I argue against Rauscher's interpretation of Kant as a metaphysical naturalist hoping to show also that he is not a full blooded idealist in meta-ethical terms.

Keywords: naturalism, Kant, meta-ethics

Resumo: Neste artigo, examino a leitura de Rauscher segundo a qual Kant é um naturalista metafísico e um anti-naturalista metodológico. Além disso, discuto as implicações meta-éticas de uma interpretação que vê em Kant tipo qualquer de naturalista. Sustento que Kant não pode ser considerado um naturalista em sentido metafísico, embora, em certo sentido, ele seja um não-naturalista metodológico. Depois, exponho que a leitura naturalista que Rauscher faz de Kant pode ser um dos motivos dele para considerar a meta-ética de Kant como sendo idealista. Argumento contra Rauscher e sua interpretação de Kant como naturalista metafísico, esperando que possa mostrar também que ele não é um idealista puro-sangue, em termos meta-éticos.

Palavras-chave: naturalismo, Kant, meta-ética

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