

# The paradoxes of Enlightenment. A rhetorical and anthropological approach to Kant's *Beantwortung*

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## 1. Kant and the three senses of paradox

In Kant there are at least three different senses of paradox. A strict anthropological sense, a rhetorical sense and a metaphysical (or anthropological-metaphysical) sense. It is not always easy to distinguish these three senses since, as we will see in what follows, they can be found overlapped in the text of *Beantwortung*.

*The anthropological sense of paradox.* In Kant's *Anthropologie im pragmatischen Hinsicht* we find paradox as the manifestation of logical egoism (*Anth*, AA 07: 128-129).<sup>1</sup> An opinion is paradoxical when it “contradicts generally accepted, *allgemeine*, opinion”<sup>2</sup> (*ibid.*, p. 128). In this anthropological sense paradox is nothing but the inclination of one who thinks obstinately against the opinion “of others” (usually due to vanity). Now, paradox can also have a positive potentiality for thinking.

Prejudices have three different sources, but imitation is perhaps the most usual and the strongest. Man “is [...] by nature quite inclined toward imitation” (cfr. *V-Lo/Blomberg*, AA 24: 163; cfr. also *Log* AA 09: 76).<sup>3</sup> Thus, a prejudice of imitation – in a sense, a prejudice as such – is the inclination “*toward passive use of reason*” (AA 09: 76). Notice that prejudice is a dynamical phenomenon of the mind. More precisely, prejudice is the *inertia* (remember that *Gemüt* is composed of *Kräfte*) of human thought, persuaded by common opinions. Imitation is thus “the cultivation of one's understanding, [...] according to the example of

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<sup>1</sup> The citations throughout this article will be abbreviated following the Siglenverzeichnis of *Kant-Studien*.

<sup>2</sup> I follow the English translation by R. B. Louden: *Anthropology from a pragmatic point of view* (Cambridge University Press, 2006).

<sup>3</sup> *The Blomberg logic* (in: *Lectures on logic*. Trans. by J. M. Young. Cambridge University Press, 1992), *The Jäsche logic* (in: *ibid.*).

others” (emphasis mine). In prejudice oneself disappears among the indefinite others, actually a great many, who sustain and inertially drive the common opinions. Common opinions are not accepted because of any epistemological criterion (in such case they would be universal statements, i.e., knowledge, which are just the opposite of opinions – *KrV*, A 822/ B 850). They are incorporated because of their *anthropological strength*. Anyway, prejudice entails the dynamic phenomenon of the *remission* of the powers of the mind and of their subsequent movements. The inertia of matter, to which prejudice is comparable, is “its lifelessness as matter in itself”, i.e. the “mere incapacity to move of itself” (*MAN*, AA 04: 544, 551).<sup>4</sup> It is in this regard where paradox works as an antidote against prejudice. Logical egoism is antagonistic to the masses’ opinions.<sup>5</sup> Thus, while the “common, *gemeine*, opinion” has a numbing effect over the mind (*VNAEF*, AA 08: 415), paradox “arouses the mind to attention and investigation, which often lead to discoveries” (*Anth*, AA 07: 129). But paradox is also an antidote against error. “The incompatibility of the judgments of others with our own is [...] an external mark of error”. That is, although non-coincidence with common human understanding is no reason to reject a judgment, it can be regarded “as a cue to investigate our procedure”. Paradox serves “to orient oneself in thought” (*Log*, AA 09: 57).

In the *Beantwortung* we find the anthropological sense of paradox. The purpose is none other than to break the inertia of prejudice, which is socially installed and paralyzes the political community.<sup>6</sup> Notice that the only diagnosis of the need for Enlightenment, the presence of a generalized self-incurred immaturity, implies a surprising statement: the minors give up being master of themselves and they do it willingly! Kant suggests that something is wrong in the despotic form of government (he says literally that the government “misunderstands itself”, AA 08: 41). The Prince is worried about the “danger” that would threaten him if he allowed his subjects to make use of their own reason; that is, he is worried about the consequences of such a use for “public peace”. But the

<sup>4</sup> *Metaphysical foundations of natural science* (trans. and ed. by Michael Friedman. Cambridge University Press, 2004).

<sup>5</sup> There are other kinds of prejudices, those based on self-love, which are connected with egoism. See: *Log*, AA 09: 80.

<sup>6</sup> In the example of a “religious organization” Kant points out that one of the “sacred rights of mankind” is the progress. Renouncing to such a progress is forbidden. That is, “*all citizens* [emphasis mine] [...] would be left free [...] to make remarks on the failings of the current institutions” (*WA*, AA 08: 38-39), either religious or civil. We follow the translation of Schmidt, *What is Enlightenment?: Eighteenth-century answers and twentieth-century questions*. (University of California Press, 1996).

government must distinguish between the quiet state of the society, which would be his only worry, and the dynamical state of the manner of thinking, which must be free. Kant tries to show the Prince that he has “little to fear” from the freedom of the public use of reason. The *Regierung* is mistaken if it believes that the freedom of arguing, even about legislation, represents a danger for peace; but it is also immature since it considers “unworthy” (and not as its duty) to treat its subjects as free beings. The anthropological paradox –minors are responsible of their own immaturity– which turns into the motto “Have the courage to use your own understanding!”, runs parallel to the ‘government paradox’ –despotic Government is responsible for its indignity– whose motto should be ‘have the courage to let your subjects govern themselves by their own reason!’ or, if you wish, ‘have the courage to abandon your self-incurred despotic form of government!’ The key is that Government misunderstands itself if it proceeds despotically.<sup>7</sup> Men treated as machines shape a social machine whose ruler makes decisions only in accord with its arbitrariness. Thus, the Government also treats itself unworthily. Because if Government proceeds following the ruler’s choice, and not his will, it proceeds mechanically. Choice is only a part of nature in us and obeys it blindly; the will, on the contrary, obeys only reason. In sum, a despotic government is in a state of immaturity since, first, it has no courage to hear reason in general, and, second, it has no strength to give up its potestas, which has only arbitrariness behind it, and to let itself, and also the people, govern autonomously. The anthropological paradox of the subject is revealed as the paradox of the ruler too.

*The rhetorical sense of paradox.* Paradox is also a figure of speech. Paradox is an apparent contradiction (a contradiction “at first glance”;<sup>8</sup> see *MS*, AA 07: 417). We know a similar figure, antinomy, which also constitutes a conflict that is also apparent. However, while in

<sup>7</sup> Kant explains this with more precision in *Zum ewigen Frieden*. In this work Kant establishes a distinction between the form of government, *forma regiminis*, and the form of sovereignty, *forma imperii* (AA 08: 352; I follow the English translation of David L. Colclasure: *Toward perpetual peace and other writings on politics, peace, and history*. Yale University Press, 2006). There are three forms of sovereignty, which depend on the number of those who can formally hold power: autocracy, aristocracy and democracy. The forms of government, however, concern “the manner in which the state makes use of its power” (*ibid.*). In the republican manner the executive power is separate from the legislative power; i.e. the form of government is representative. In the despotic manner the power to make laws and the power to enforce them are concentrated in only one person. As we will see in what follows, in the *Beantwortung* Kant proposes to the Prince a change in the form of government but he does not say anything about the form of sovereignty. Kant seeks a representative form of government in which the ruler considers that all the citizens who he represents are of his concern.

<sup>8</sup> *The metaphysics of moral* (trans. Mary J. Gregor. Cambridge University Press, 1996).

antinomy there are transcendental ideas of reason, which are necessary, in the paradox we find an opposition between concepts that are not ideas at all. In any case, Kant uses paradox to present an apparent contradiction with the intention of moving the thought of those who read it. However, as we shall see, in the background of all these paradoxes is the metaphysical paradox, which is the apparent contradiction between activity and passivity in man.

Kant uses paradox repeatedly in the *Beantwortung* in order to overcome resistance to his political proposals. Paradox allows Kant to make proposals that would otherwise be perceived as dangerous. One of the terms in the paradox contains the true interest of the philosopher. This is also the interest of the people. The other term, which seems contradictory, satisfies the interest of the prince. In the *Beantwortung* Kant repeatedly asserts that the reform which the Enlightenment promotes will not alter public security. The change in the way of thinking—which Enlightenment also consists of (WA, AA 08: 36)—does not mean, at least immediately, disobedience. We will also see how this apparent contradiction is to be found in other concepts, such as illustration, freedom, etc.

*The anthropological-metaphysical sense of paradox.* The paradoxes with a metaphysical or anthropological-metaphysical range are the “paradox of inner sense” and the “paradox of duty.” The first appears in the second edition of the *KrV*. The inner sense “represents to consciousness even our own selves only as we appear to ourselves, not as we are in ourselves”<sup>9</sup> (*KrV*, B 152). Receptivity belongs to our senses and to the inner sense as well. The only representation that human intuition can provide is sensitive and is the result of affection (B 33). Now, even if the object of the inner sense is the very subject of knowledge (subjective genitive) there must be affection, so that the subject itself also becomes object. That is, self-intuition means self-affection. “Now this appears to be contradictory, inasmuch as we just thus stand in a passive relation to ourselves” (*ibid.*, p. 153). The paradox of duty is expressed in the same terms. Man is a being capable of duties to himself. Thus, “the proposition that asserts a duty to myself (I *ought* to bind myself), would involve being bound to bind myself (a passive obligation that was still, in the same sense of the relation, also an active obligation), and hence a contradiction” (*MS*, AA 06: 417). In both cases the paradox is the opposition between the active status of the subject as maker of rules (either transcendental rules or moral rules) and the

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<sup>9</sup> *Critique of pure reason* (trans. by Norman Kemp Smith. Macmillan, 1929).

passive status of him as being subject to the same rules (as a subject of experience or as a subject of duty). Roughly speaking, the apparent contradiction occurs between man's status of *auctor* and his status of *subiectum* (*ibid.*).

But there is no contradiction. Notice that in both cases we speak about man, *Mensch*, and that critical knowledge is not metaphysical knowledge; nor is it transcendental. In the *MS* what is at stake is a metaphysics of virtue and not a critique of practical reason. The *KpV* deals with the demonstration of the unconditional validity of moral law. This requires reducing the subject to a purely rational instance. This is achieved by isolating practical reason and moral law, so that their inalienable correlation becomes evident.<sup>10</sup> The metaphysics of morals, however, deals with freedom of choice (*MS*, AA 06: 216). This is important because the subject of this metaphysics is not will but choice, *Willkür*. Notice that choice "is sensibly affected and does not of itself conform to the pure will but often opposes it" (*MS*, AA 06: 221). Virtue is only achieved thanks a particular activity of the subject upon himself. This activity is the methodology (there is a methodology of practical reason as well as a methodology of virtue). The methodology is a ruled activity which deals with "the way in which one can secure *entrance* into the human mind of the laws of pure practical reason, *influence* on the maxims of the same" (*KpV*, AA 05: 151).<sup>11</sup>

In the *KrV* the transcendental subject (constituent) cannot avoid being an empirical object (constituted). The spontaneous subject cannot escape from the rules of the possibility of experience, even in the experience of self-knowledge. The "we" who arises repeatedly in the scholium of § 24 is the same which appears in the expression "us humans", *uns Menschen*, of B 33 (both texts are added in the second edition). This is the only self-reference possible for "all finite, thinking beings" (*KrV*, B 72). A man is also receptive or sensitive when he is knowing and he cannot avoid leaving a phenomenal track in this operation, neither in the knowledge of himself or even in the spontaneity of his understanding. As the example of attention shows (see note of B 156-157, in the same § 24), and notice that it is an example of an anthropological operation (cfr. *Anth*, AA 07: 131), self-affection belongs to the possibility of experience as well as to the experience itself. But the

<sup>10</sup> Freedom is the *ratio essendi* of moral law, while moral law is the *ratio cognoscendi* of freedom. Cfr. *KpV*, AA 05: 4, note). In morality the only consciousness of the law is in itself a positive faculty or capacity and a force.

<sup>11</sup> *Critique of practical reason* (in: *Practical philosophy*. Trans. and ed. by Mary J. Gregor. p. 133-271. Cambridge University Press, 1996).

paradoxical fact is that man is capable of acting on himself. Man is able to act on his own powers. Kant has dealt in the *Anth* with a “double I” (AA 07: 134, note). But the logical or metaphysical question is not at stake in the *Beantwortung*. The mentioned doubling of the self rather serves to save practical freedom and moral law from experience and its possibility. The question in our text is anthropological.

In what follows we will confirm that this anthropological horizon predominates in the *Beantwortung* and that it will be also the key to almost all paradoxes.

## 2. The paradox of immaturity or the paradox of Enlightenment

“*Enlightenment is mankind's exit from its self-incurred immaturity*” (WA, AA 08: 35). Enlightenment is something negative since it is the abandonment, *Ausgang*, of a state which is left behind (or more precisely inwards). Kant describes this immaturity as a *Mangel* or lack of resolution and courage. Nevertheless, this lack will concern prejudice and its logical mechanism (although the lack it is not purely logical but dynamic). We will see this in the next section.

The rhetorical terms of the definition of Enlightenment are at first glance negative. In the Third *Critique* Kant specifies that Enlightenment is constituted by something “bare negative” (KU, AA 05: 294, note).<sup>12</sup> “Bare” refers to the inalienable condition of such “negative”, but in Kant *bloss* devalues the word which is qualified by it, while it also guarantees its meaning as a *minimum*, which cannot disappear. This devaluation of the negative aspect of Enlightenment gives us a hint of its very nature. Enlightenment is a *conversion*. More precisely, Enlightenment is a transition between two states of mind, *Gemüt*.<sup>13</sup> The state of departure is

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<sup>12</sup> The translation of *Ausgang* which corresponds best with this meaning is that of “exit”. This translation has been adopted by Schmidt (ed. cit.). The translation of “emergence”, which we find in the versions of Humphrey (*Perpetual peace and other essays on politics, history and moral practice*. Hackett Publishing Company, 1983), Nisbet (*Kant political writings*. Cambridge University Press, 1991) and Gregor (*Practical philosophy*. Cambridge University Press, 1996) is more questionable because what emerges appears to rise, to grow up or to develop (actions that also implies certain coming-into-presence) and, although the concept of abandonment of immaturity has this nuance, the concept of exit does not. The term *Ausgang* has the connotation of crossing from one side to the other, or more precisely from inside to outside. Finally, the translation for “emancipation” by Colclasure (in: *Toward perpetual peace and other writings on politics, peace, and history*, ed. cit.) is a strong version, actually an interpretation, which does not suit the term *Ausgang* at all.

<sup>13</sup> Kant frequently translates *Gemüt* as “animus”; there is also a translation of *Gemüt* as “mens” (OP, AA 22: 112), but this is not the more usual translation which we find in Kant’s texts. This translation is to be found mainly in anthropological texts, where the term will gain a depth that it has still not got in the texts of the first *Critique* (in this work *Gemüt* denotes a faculty basically

negative; it is a lack or *Mangel* of the force of the Faculty of desire. The abandonment of such a state is a positive phenomenon, since it supposes an enforcement of the faculty.<sup>14</sup> This explains why the first paragraph of the *Beantwortung* begins with a definition and ends with an imprecation. Notice that the definition is the expression of what Kant calls *Aufgabe*. It is a problem, but with the dynamic sense of an impasse, and it is at the same time a task, i.e. a pertinaciously demanded work. Kant uses this word when speaking of transcendental illusions (for instance, in the Introduction of the First *Critique*; see A 2/ B 6 ff.). *Aufgabe* has an ambiguous meaning, descriptive and prescriptive (exhortative) at the same time. Thus, the definition of Enlightenment, which is formally a *Namenerklärung*, nominal definition or a determination of the word (see *KrV*, A 727-8/ B 755-6), progresses in a few lines to the rhetorical manner of imprecation (the nominal definition is rhetorically neutral). The definition, which opens the school texts (the usual order is: *definitio*, *corollarium* and *scholium*), contains the analysis of the meaning of the word; in this case, the definition of Enlightenment contains the analysis of the factors of the state of immaturity and of their composition. The imprecation, which belongs rather to an oratorical style, contains a command; in our text, the command to surpass such a state.

Kant acknowledges two kinds of incapacity, “*naturaliter vel civiliter*” (*MS*, AA 06: 314). The incapacity of nature in general, the natural incapacity *simpliciter*, is immaturity. But immaturity is only apparently natural. Immaturity depends on the *course* of time in nature. In this sense, immaturity is also called minority or *Minderjährigkeit* (*Anthr.*, AA 07: 208). Minors are not capable since they are under a certain age and they need the status of those under whose tutelage they must be, the guardians. However, human beings are only minors, not because of nature, but because they are members of a *civil* society, in which legally-caused relationships between citizens prevail and are fixed conventionally. That is, to be under certain age is both *naturaliter*, since the course of the years brings maturity, and *civiliter*, since laws stipulate the age of legal responsibility. The other incapacity is “legal incapacity”.

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distinguishable from the soul or *Seele*). Although the usual English translation, “mind”, has, we say, a prevailing *intellectualist* meaning in which the anthropological scope is lost, in what follows we will use “mind” together with the term in German and Latin.

<sup>14</sup> In the *KU* the lacking state is superstition. Superstition is “the greatest prejudice” and Enlightenment is the “Liberation from superstition” (AA 05: 294; *Critique of the power of judgment*. Ed. by P. Guyer; Trans. by P. Guyer and E. Matthews. Cambridge University Press, 2000). But notice that here there is a lack of understanding, which is the ruler of nature laws. That is, the “blindness” which is implied in superstition is not of the purposes of the Faculty of desire but of the very legislation of nature which is in charge of the understanding (see *KrV*, A 125-127).

This is, for instance, the incapacity of women of taking care of their own properties, for which tutelage is necessary. But this incapacity is also only apparently civil, since nature itself has disposed the sexual difference (*loci varia*). In both cases, in the natural as well as in the civil incapacity, the subject who is minor (child or woman) is neither naturally nor civilly responsible, either of itself or of its own (they are passive members of society –cfr. *MS*, 06: 314-5– and of nature as well). In both cases the minors are not the cause of such a privation of responsibility. The cause is always *extrinsic*. Therefore, the liberation from immaturity is never in the hands of minors: maturation is in the hands of nature, and derogation in the hands of active subjects.

Let us consider now the incapacity which the Enlightenment faces. Natural incapacity is *Unmündigkeit* or immaturity. This incapacity, however, is only apparently natural because nature does not work by itself, either as a cause or as a mechanism. The immaturity which concerns the Enlightenment is not left behind in the course of a lapse of time. Time in nature has fixed limits (conventional time too, so it does not matter whether we consider the time of maturation either as naturally or as conventionally fixed). The natural (or social) majority could be reached at some time and immaturity could be then overridden (or abrogated). But the immaturity which concerns Enlightenment is of another kind. Kant claims that such an incapacity is *selbst-verschuldeten*, due to self-responsibility.<sup>15</sup>

Immaturity concerns inalienably human beings, *Menschen*. Enlightenment is concerned by the anthropological respect (*Hinsicht*). The incapacity of Enlightenment lies, as men also are, midway between freedom and nature. Remember that Kant often thinks of the human being in terms of a tension between humanity and animality, or between the two respects of object in general, *phaenomenon* and *noumenon* (man is at the same time *homo noumenon* and *homo phenomenon*). But the problem of Enlightenment does not concern transcendental freedom (the problem is not whether freedom is possible at all), but anthropological freedom. This means that the middle point is man, but considered as an

<sup>15</sup> We have found three translations of the word *selbstverschuldeten*, “self-incurred” (Nisbert, Schmidt, Colclasure, etc.), “self-imposed” (Humphrey) and “self-caused” (others). But these translations are misleading. Human nature is not a rough mechanism at all. Although nature in man is indeed a mechanism (see, for instance, *KpV*, AA 05: 97), man is able to overcome his animality. If the fault were not due to mere nature, man would be absolutely non-responsible (see *KrV*, A 551/ B 579, note; Kant uses the word *unverschuldeten*). The problem is whether man is –and to what extent– the very cause of such immaturity. In our opinion, the problem is not the responsibility of man as such; immaturity is a lack. It is rather a question of whether man is responsible of offering *no resistance* against the inertia which makes him remain in the state of immaturity. It is a question of whether man is *responsible of not moving* himself towards freedom.



inalienable social being. The anthropological medium is society, or rather, the world.<sup>16</sup> Thus, as in other writings about history, in the *Beantwortung* man is taken as a whole (the expression *im Grossen*, “in the large”, is in *IaG*, AA 08: 17), that is, man is taken as humanity, *Menschheit*. The point of view of these texts, and the very respect from which the *Beantwortung* must be considered, is always cosmopolitan (*cosmicus* and *politicus*).

Anyway, immaturity is a civil incapacity, in a specifically anthropological sense. Immaturity is neither strictly legal nor strictly civil. In the Enlightenment incapacity deals with institutions as *profoundly civilian* as the Treasury, the Army, the Church or the Government. These institutions exhibit civil and anthropological minority and are governed by guardians who perpetuate those institutions in such a state. In another text, Kant also calls them *Volksleiter*, leaders or conductors of the people (*TP*, AA 08: 303).<sup>17</sup> Guardians are obviously the civil extrapolation of the figure of parents in nature and of tutors in law. Guardians are –and this is the central thesis of the *Beantwortung*– a mixed figure, that is, insofar as man is also a mixed being. Guardians shape the incapacity of institutions as well as of their officers on the basis of the blind obedience of the will, that is, in the absence of reasoning. But this blindness (the incapacitation of will for reasoning) presents another aspect. Guardians disseminate prejudices which disable the users of those institutions. Prejudices are, so to speak, blind instructions which reason assumes mechanically without examination. In its prejudiced state, reason is dominated dynamically by the weakness and inertia of choice. Here we have a formulation of the very paradox of Enlightenment. The exit from immaturity needs a change in law although any legal change cannot suppress minority automatically (positively). The change needed is a change in the manner of thinking, which is civilian as well as anthropological.

<sup>16</sup> “Knowledge of the world in the usual sense means knowledge of the human being”. *Menschenkunde*, AA 25: 854. But anthropology is also, reciprocally, a “study for the world” (AA 25: 854). Far from being an academic knowledge, anthropology is a *cosmicus* knowledge. In this sense, as knowledge of men and the world, anthropology is “primarily informal, popular project” (Louden, 2011, p. 50), which must promote a “enlightenment for common life” (AA 25: 853; cited by Louden, 2011, p. 51). For the anthropology as a “world-knowledge” see also Louden (2000), p. 21-22.

<sup>17</sup> “On the common saying: This may be true in theory, but it does not hold in practice” (in: *Toward perpetual peace and other writings on politics, peace, and history*, trans. and ed. cit., p. 56).

### 3. Prejudices and inertial dynamics of the Enlightenment

Let us develop what we have called the dynamics of Enlightenment. First of all, remember that the faculties of the mind are forces. In the *Beantwortung* the initial anthropological fact of Enlightenment, immaturity, is also expressed in dynamical terms. The exit is possible thanks to an active use of reason, which is contrasted to the dynamic states of immobility, characterized as “laziness” and “cowardice”. Laziness and cowardice are the modes of resistance of *arbitrium*, whose incapacity has to be reversed. In the *Anthropologie* laziness, *Faulheit*, and cowardice, *Feigheit*, are the modes of the *indoles abiecta* of the mind (*MS*, AA 06: 407). They are moods of *Gemüt* which are resistant to activity. In the *Verkündigung* Kant connects philosophy and the “highest level of the living nature of man”. At such a level the active use of the faculties (here this use is linked to soul) is strengthened, while the lowest level corresponds to very dispositions of reason in which the passive use prevails and whose physical state is decomposition or *Fäulniss* (*VNAEF*, AA 08: 413). In the state of decomposition there is movement indeed but a movement which is still inertial. Living matter entails the loss or disappearance of movement. In other words, material processes of life are chemical. On the contrary, life forces, or at least those of animal life, reveal a matter which is constantly revitalized by the soul, *anima*.<sup>18</sup> We find the same relationship between the positive and the privative in other texts. Kant claims that reason, as a faculty or capacity, *Vermögen*, concurs with its negation (actually with its *privatio*), as a non-faculty or incapacity, *Unvermögen* (B 22). In any case, immaturity is a kind of incapacity which implies the persistence of a dynamic obstacle (resistance) and the remission of a (counter) power.

Now, the phenomenon of Enlightenment will not be thoroughly understood unless we remember that the dynamics of the faculties of the mind are also behind the logical patterns of prejudices. The initial state of immaturity is a state of weakness. The mind works as a mechanism (in the definition of the prejudices caused by *Nachahmung* –supra– the passivity of reason is described as “*Mechanism der Vernunft*”). But the

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<sup>18</sup> We can say that the Enlightenment is another phenomenon of the conflicts of reason, which, like others, cannot be reduced to a contradiction; instead there is a particular game involved of forces and resistances. Actually, some of the figures which Kant uses for expressing controversy or conflict are connected to the phenomenology of force. Let us only remember that Kant often speaks of straight and curved lines, and that he admits the metaphorical power of external intuition for the exhibition of non-empirical concepts (cfr. *MS*, AA 05: 232-3; see also *KrV*, B 291). For instance, transcendental appearance is explained as a “curvilinear movement” (B 350-351), as if the transcendental judgement were a line which is deflected by an external force.

cause of immaturity “does not lie in a lack of understanding” (WA, AA 08: 35). It is a lack of force indeed, but the defective force is not understanding (although understanding is also a *Naturkraft* – SF, AA 07: 82) but the Faculty of desire. More precisely, the lack concerns the force of *arbitrium*. The weakness which is behind prejudice and the passive use of reason is a weakness of *arbitrium*.

Kant calls this weakness facility. The Latin translation of facility is *promptitudo* (Anth, AA 07: 147). In facility there is desire without force, because there is no difficulty in the power either. It is not that desire takes place in every circumstance; rather, desire has disappeared. In the Enlightenment, we find the best example of this facility in laziness. Laziness is not a property of the faculty of doing this or that; it does not belong to might. Actually laziness is a lack of will, precisely the lack that is caused when will simply desires what is easier to get; laziness is, so to say, the un-might of will. And the easiest thing for understanding is to borrow what has been thought and told by others. This is prejudice. “One is not skilled in thinking for oneself, then one takes refuge in others and copies from them completely faithfully, as the painter copies the original” (V-Lo/Blomberg, AA 24: 162-3). That is the reason why all sources of prejudice come to the same mental operation of *repetition*. Whether it is a prejudice by imitation, by custom, or by inclination (*loci varia*), the understanding simply repeats; as if the operation of repetition, in charge of the faculty of memory, has taken the place of the force or judgment itself. Kant says in Logic Blombeg that there is here a *suspensio judicii* (AA 24: 163). Although this *suspensio* can play in favour of the mind if it is a postponement of judgment for a later investigation, it can also suppose the abandonment of the *Urteilkraft* to its own incapacity. Thus, prejudices often assume the aspect of *formulae*, which Kant has described in the *Jäsche Logik* as “rules whose expression serves as a model for imitation” (Log, AA 09: 77).<sup>19</sup>

In any case, notice that the tutor or guardian is the figure which occupies the place of a passive *arbitrium*. The guardian is just the one who is in the place of the own will and thought and impersonates every desire and reflection. The book, the pastor of souls or the physician substitutes my understanding, my consciousness and my will. And prejudices are the *formulae* which hide every passivity under the guise of an apparent knowledge.

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<sup>19</sup> See also V-Log/Wiener, AA 24: 867 ff.; and V-Log/Dohna, AA 24: 737 ff.

#### 4. The paradox of heautocracy and Enlightenment as virtue

Immaturity is an inertial state of an understanding which is left to itself and remains in this state so long as reason intervenes to change it.<sup>20</sup> Notice that the lack of such immaturity is simultaneously resistance and force. The cause of this paradox lies in the fact that the subject and the object of such a movement of exit are the same, although the faculties are not. Understanding is the subject of a use and all uses are in charge of reason. The force with which the Enlightenment is concerned is the force of the faculty which *makes use of* the understanding, which is reason. Reason is the only faculty which is able to take the understanding as its object (*KrV*, B 760). The problem of Enlightenment is not the perfection of thought. It is not the problem of a general and pure Logic (*KrV*, B 77). *Gebrauch* means a transitive action or an application, which is the genuine problem of the general and non-pure or “applied logic” (*cfr.* B 77). In this use there are also rules, but what distinguishes the logical use from the applied use is that the logical use takes place according to the rules which govern the understanding itself, formally or *tautologically* (this is the strict or bare “logical use of understanding”), while the applied use takes into account the understanding as object, that is, according to its *factual* or *empirical conditions* (*cfr. ibid.*). In *KrV* Kant links the applied logic, against its common meaning, with psychology (A 53/ B 77). Applied logic takes its “empirical principles” from psychology (A 55/ B 79).<sup>21</sup>

The use which we are dealing with is the applied use, where the force of a faculty acts over the force of another faculty. But this is not the only nuance. Besides, the use here is that of one’s *own* faculty. In the expression use-of-the-understanding the genitive is at the same time objective and subjective. The use of the understanding by reason implies a separation within the subject, so that it becomes at the same time object. This separation does not only mean that there are two different faculties. The true separation is that between two different modes or *indoles* of faculty, activity and passivity, where the capacity/incapacity is concerned by the *proportion* between these modes.

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<sup>20</sup> According to Deleuze’s distinction between two senses of faculty (Deleuze, 1984, p. 6 ff.), every higher faculty, the Faculty of knowledge, the Faculty of desire and the Feeling of pleasure and displeasure, has a force of representation which governs the synthesis. In the case of the Faculty of desire the legislative force is reason.

<sup>21</sup> The same problem will be found in ethics. More precisely, this is the problem of “impure ethics” (see Louden, 2000) and, as we will see in what follows, it is the very nucleus of heautocracy.

The difficulty of the use-of-understanding can be summarized then as follows: there is something unexpected and apparently contradictory in the fact that we are at the same time active and passive. It is paradoxical that we are at the same time for and against ourselves (here we see the phenomenological resolution of the difficulties of the incapacity of the Enlightenment). This is the aforementioned anthropological-metaphysical sense of paradox. The same sense is found in the paradox of the inner sense and in the paradox of duty (supra), which are paradoxes deep rooted in the human condition. The passivity of this subject belongs to this minority, in its strictly natural meaning as well as in its civil one. Kant pictures in the *Beantwortung* an anthropological state in which man is at the same time active and passive; this is the state of the use-of-understanding. But this state is parallel to the form of society, where one part is governed and the other part governs.<sup>22</sup> We find the same paradox formulated by Plato in the phrase “master of himself”. For if this is the case, one “must also be slave to himself, and the slave to himself must be master of himself” (*The Republic*, 430 e-431a).

Kant has conceived the subject as an independent instance from nature. The concepts of autonomy and heautonomy develop the possibilities of such independence. The concept of autonomy belongs to the practical respect and is “the property of the will by which it is law to itself” (*GMS*, AA 04: 440). In the teleological respect we find the concept of heautonomy, which is a particular prescription of the subject to himself, but only “to guide its reflection about nature” (*KU*, AA 05: 185). Now, Kant also speaks about “autocracy”. This is “the consciousness of the capacity to master one’s inclinations when they rebel against the law” (*MS*, AA 06: 383).<sup>23</sup> Autocracy does not only mean independence but also the power to overcome the resistance to law. Kant has theorized the concept of “virtue” as the capacity of the will to overcome the obstacles in our nature against doing our duty (*MS*, AA 06: 380). Virtue is seen as a capacity of self-constraint. As we have pointed out about the paradox of duty, self-constraint implies that the subject is at the same time active and passive. So does virtue. Besides,

<sup>22</sup> The *Beantwortung*, as well as other Kantian texts of political philosophy, can be considered as a repetition of other ancient political texts, such as Plato’s *The Republic*. In this sense, we could say that in the *Beantwortung* there is the same set of links between soul and society (or state) which we find in the Platonic work. Thus, either society is an “enlarged image” of the soul or the soul, thanks to education, reproduces the political patterns of society.

<sup>23</sup> Baxley has explained autocracy in the same terms: “the virtuous agent plays the master over herself [sensibility] subordinating her sensible to her rational nature and ruling herself by reason” (Baxley, 2010, p. 49).

virtue is linked with courage; virtue is also defined as “strength of resolution in a human being endowed with freedom” (*MS*, AA 06: 384).<sup>24</sup>

Even though the analysis of the Enlightenment does not say anything about the need of a force in order to successfully reach the exit from immaturity, the required transformation of minors into adults demands a strengthening of the *Gemüt* as well as of the civil institutions. *Enlightenment*, it could be said, *demand*s the promotion of a civil virtue. Thus, Enlightenment is linked with education. More precisely, it is linked with the “public instruction of the people in its duties and rights vis-a-vis the state to which they belong” (*SF*, AA 07: 89).<sup>25</sup> But, how to get this instruction? Kant says in this text that people “take little or no notice” of those, the philosophers, who implore the state to take their “rightful needs” to heart (*ibid.*). The required reform of the state must begin with the *Beamter* or civil servants. That is, we need to previously educate those who make the state’s institutions work. And, if this is the case, could something like virtue formation be found in such instruction?

### **5. The paradox of self-government. The apparent contradiction between private and public use of reason**

The difference between public and private use of reason is well-known. The private use of reason “is that which a person may make of it in a particular civil post or office with which he is entrusted”. By the public use of reason, Kant writes, “I mean that use which anyone may make of it *as a scholar* addressing the entire public of the *world of readers*” (*WA*, AA 08: 37).

The public and the private use of reason seem opposite. However, both the public and the private use of reason belong to the capacity of reason: both are positive uses of reason and both are requirements of the Enlightenment too. There is no contradiction between the two uses but an antagonism. It is a formulation of the paradox of self-government, if we may call it so, which consists of the fact that people who govern, in this case the officers, are also governed.

We recognize in both uses the active/passive opposition with which the *Beantwortung* itself is opened. This *does not* mean that the distinction between minority and maturity which is exposed in the

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<sup>24</sup> Regarding the relationship between courage and virtue see Tampio (2012, p. 38 ff.).

<sup>25</sup> Citations of *Der Streit* follow the translation of Mary J. Gregor (*The conflict of faculties. Der Streit der Fakultäten*. Abaris Books, 1979).

anthropological preamble that opens the text (AA 08: 35-6) corresponds to the distinction between the two uses of reason. In fact, this confusion is at the root of paradoxes. Both uses are the condition for the exit from minority, including the minority of guardians as well. But for now it is important to notice that in the relationship between guardians and minors there is no asymmetry, as indeed there is between these both of these and scholars. Guardians and minors are subject to prejudices. As Kant says, “it is very harmful to propagate prejudices, because they finally avenge themselves on the very people who first encouraged them” (ibid.) Guardians do not command prejudices, neither do they command minors; rather, minors can take revenge on guardians (AA 08: 36). This explains why the exit from immaturity cannot be extrinsic: the selves who are responsible for immaturity are both guardians and minors.

But scholars, who are another kind of participant in Enlightenment, are also needful of such a process. However, in this case the method includes them as players and not only as spectators (as is indeed the case of minors and guardians). The scholars have their own immaturity, not to be confused with that of minors and guardians. In *The conflict of faculties* Kant makes a further distinction between scholars proper and technicians of learning or businessmen (AA 07: 18), which corresponds *grosso modo* to the difference in the *Beantwortung* between scholars and guardians. It is important to note this because many mistakes in the understanding of the relationship between the public and private use of reason lie in the confusion of scholars with guardians. The Enlightenment which must overcome the immaturity of guardians is that of the instruction of the people (see below). This is the popular Enlightenment, so to speak. But there is also another Enlightenment, the Enlightenment of the State and its officers. The *Beantwortung* is actually an ambiguous text (it is one of the early texts of the Kantian philosophy of history which will develop towards a philosophy of right) and does not make a clear distinction between both Enlightenments. Anyway, we are interested in the paradox which emerges from the consideration of the two uses of reason as opposite or even contradictory.

The paradox is located in the formula “argue, ... but obey!” (AA 08: 41) and is usually expressed as the contradiction between freedom, on the side of the public use (public use must be “at all times free”), and obedience, on the side of the private use. But notice that the opposed term to freedom is obedience, not guidance or *Leitung*. The difference between the public and the private use of reason is also explained as an active and a passive use respectively (we find again a dynamical expression of the process of Enlightenment). But remember that the two

uses concern one and the same reason; that is, both uses concern the same persons, the scholars, who can occupy different places, either the open place of publicity, *Öffentlichkeit*, as writers, or the limited one of a civil post, as officers. Now, scholars –and perhaps this is the point that Kant has not stressed sufficiently– are not prejudiced. Scholars make a passive use of their reason; they obey, since they can also make an active use, that is, since they are able to will. The guidance of the prejudices, the way in which prejudices subject man and transform him into minor, is not obedience. Obedience is not possible without will. The minors (and their guardians) do not have will but choice. In other words, obedience, which concerns scholars, is not arbitrariness, which concerns guardians and minors.<sup>26</sup>

The Enlightenment promotes will as the capacity of setting in motion the faculty of thought. It is important to notice that the passivity of the prejudiced reason supposes above all the *nullity of the will* (or its extreme weakness, the arbitrariness of a will without criterion). That's why Kant uses the verb *rässoniren*. *Rässoniren* is the exercise of arguing or using rules and implies the knowledge of principles (*Anth*, AA 07: 199-200) as well as the will to discuss them. In the adage "Argue as much as you want and about what you want, but obey!" the issue at stake is not only freedom of thought as an activity but its universal exercise. The Enlightenment cares for the freedom of the exercise and practice of reason without restriction.

Thus, obedience does not suppose the absence of reasoning. This occurs in minority and, as Foucault pointed out, "There is tutelage when obedience is confused with non-reasoning" (Foucault, 2010, p. 36). In fact, as Kant says, "a lesser degree of civil freedom" makes possible the higher degree of free thinking (WA, AA 08: 141). But to understand this *in sensu recto* we must consider that free thinking is not purposeless. The use of reason is a *political use* of reason, if we may say so, which is determined by the purposiveness, *Zweckmässigkeit*, or usefulness, *Nützlichkeit*, of public institutions. This purposiveness designs the mechanism of state and evaluates it constantly and publicly. There would then be two rationalities. The rationality of the purposes (or of the public utility), which works in the public use of reason, and the rationality of the means or instruments, which would work in the private use.

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<sup>26</sup> Admitting our interpretation, the meaning of "private" could not be "defective" or "deprived" (see, for instance, O'Neill, 1992, p. 298). "Private" means "passive" and it is only concerned with the working of institutions in so far it requires rules. Publicity is concerned with the freedom of thinking and of discussing, not with the absence of rules.



But freedom of reason in the public use requires not only the presence of will but the real execution of certain actions. This freedom also demands certain *Facta* (*MS*, AA 06: 230). The public use of reason demands freedom of thought, whose opposite is prejudice, and freedom of the press, the freedom of communicating thoughts, whose opposite is censorship. The freedom of the public use is not opposed to any guidance of the understanding but to any factual restriction on the field of thought. This freedom opposes the force which Kant calls coercion or compulsion, *Gewalt* (*WDO*, AA 08: 144).<sup>27</sup> That is, “civil compulsion” or censorship is opposed to freedom of thought (*ibid.*). Certainly this freedom of the public use has the consequence of liberation, *Befreiung* (*KU*, AA 05: 294), from prejudices. But the abolition of censorship implies the restitution of the communication, and both abolition and restitution are *facta*. Here we face another kind of dynamics, the *dynamics of reason*, which promotes discussion and communication between rational beings (Kant has exploited “the critical potential of dissent”).<sup>28</sup> These dynamics enable the space of communication or *Mitteilung*. It is within the dynamics of the “community, *Gemeinschaft*” that we think. But understanding has its own dynamics. These are the dynamics of the private use of reason, which consists of the execution of rules that have been previously issued. The rationality of the private use is the rationality of the mechanism of state, which takes place in its regulations and legal provisions. We could say, continuing with the figure of civil dynamics, that while the dynamics of reason would correspond to the *actio in distans*, which would address the education or *Bildung*, and whose product is a critical and distanced way of thinking, the dynamics of understanding would correspond to contact and would be the matter of instructions, either technical or legal, which would address instruction or *Belehrung*, whose product is just a disciplined Judgement (see below).

## 6. The paradox of publicity or what it means to be a reader

The civil paradox is the reproduction of the paradox of self-government or heautocracy. But to be sure of this it is necessary to consider the second element that defines the public use of reason, which we have deliberately set aside. The public use of reason is the use which a person makes of understanding as a scholar, but if and only if the use is

<sup>27</sup> “What does it mean to orient oneself in thinking?” (in: *Religion within the boundaries of mere reason*. Trans. and ed. by A. Wood and G. Di Giovanni. Cambridge University Press), p. 12.

<sup>28</sup> See Deligiorgi, 2005, p. 83.

made before the *world* of readers. The possibility of communication, which must be added to freedom of the press (see above), lies in the reader. We have dealt with communication as an *active exercise* of reason. There is a community of scholars who make active use of their reason and there is also a community of *passive speakers*. The openness of freedom of the press goes together with the openness of the *field of reception*.<sup>29</sup> There is here a variation of the paradox of heautocracy. Active users make use of their reason before passive users, the readers, who are the reasonable spectators of the discussion between scholars.

Kant insists that the use of reason is public, *öffentliche*, or open only if this publicity or openness is really total. The community of reception is a world or *Welt*. The problem is not only the community of those who make public use of reason, the community of scholars, which is not the totality of citizens at all. The difficulty lies in the *quantum* of those who attend that public use, the *Publikum*. Public use of reason is made before all the readers, before the readers as world, or before a public that is, as Kant says, entire or total, *ganze*. The public use of reason must cross the whole society. Now, the public use is not a horizontal movement at all. The public use of reason is only *formally* popular, so to say. It takes place before the entire public, but people constitute an unrestricted field or world *only potentially*.<sup>30</sup> The public of “free citizens”, *freie Bürger*, of the first *Critique* (KrV, B 766) is not a natural whole but a technical one: it is the result of the education. The world of readers is not given once and for all. The Enlightenment is the construction of such a world. The promotion of a public *use* of reason is always and at the same time the promotion of its *reception* by a rational public. Freedom of the press only makes sense if it is accompanied by an education of the people who could read newspapers.

We could say that the subject of Enlightenment, understood in all its ambiguity (a subject is he who receives Enlightenment and also he who must take care of his own thought), is also in the distinction which Kant makes in the *Anthropologie* between *animal rationale* and *animal rationabile*. Insofar as there are thinking scholars, rationality is always in progress, either just for themselves or for their readers too. Rationality is a potential. Every *actus* of reason belongs to the never ending process of

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<sup>29</sup> To go back to the figure of physical forces: the *actio in distans* cannot take place in an empty space, *vacuum* is no place, neither physical nor political.

<sup>30</sup> See Arendt (1992, p. 43). In the same terms Claudio La Rocca reminds us that, according to the latest translation of the motto *sapere aude* (AA 21: 117), Enlightenment seeks the “absolut ends” of reason. This would not suppose a “System” but a “Modell der Rationalität”. The reason which is concerned by such teleology is, according to La Rocca (2009, p. 106), only a “formale Fähigkeit”, that is, reason is here only a potential capacity.

Enlightenment, which a progress of reason to itself, if we may so. Man is “an animal endowed with the *capacity of reason* [...] [who] can make out of himself a *rational animal*” (*Anth*, AA 07: 321), and Enlightenment is such process of civil capacitation.

Another question related to the promotion of an educated public is that of the themes of such education: what does the state have to teach?

The Enlightenment is not concerned with any specific question. The examples which appear in the *Beantwortung*, public finances, army and even religion do not point out anything specific; although there are disciplines which are concerned with such subjects, the examples show in fact the *civil condition* of man as such (and the example of religion refers to the way in which the Church constitutes itself as *Versammlung* or *Classis*; see *WA*, AA 08: 38). Thus, we can say that education refers to the affairs of the state. This is the Enlightenment of the *people*, which we have discussed above.

Civil education concerns those issues in which the citizen takes part and supports the state. These are precisely the issues in which we find the paradox of self-government, that is, where we find the distinction between ruler and ruled in the same subject. Kant’s request to the prince in religious issues is the same request that can be made in any other issue and, of course, in government issues as well. Freedom of thought will promote the enlightenment of people, first in religious issues and then in “what you want” (AA 08: 41).

What the education of people intends is the best *Bildung* of anyone as a citizen and as a member of the state machinery to which, under the figures of this or that ministry, he is subject. The Enlightenment, which apparently deals only with the public use, intends to make sense of the private use as well. Notice that it is not only the question of promoting the common interest, to which the state must serve; it is also a question of a technical interest, so to speak, an interest in the mechanism itself. The paradox here lies in the fact that the mechanism called state is non-instrumental too. It is an end and a *means*. Thus, if the Enlightenment is the formation, within the state as republic or *gemeinen Wesen*, not only of a world of readers but also of a community of citizens, we have here a whole which is paradoxically composed of scholars and laymen. Or, are not the citizens, all the citizens –or the citizens as such– just the scholars of the regime under which they are governed?

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**Abstract.** This paper consists of two parts. In the first part (section 1), I shall expound the kantian concept of paradox and its three different senses, the anthropological, the rhetorical and the metaphysical. In the second part (sections 2-6), I shall examine the presence of these senses of paradox in Kant's texts about Enlightenment (with special attention on the *Beantwortung*). The paradox of immaturity consists of the fact that we are responsible, as human beings, and non-responsible, as subjects of a State, of the exit from it. Another formulation of the same paradox, but in dynamical and metaphysical terms (which will specifically occupy section 3), is that of heautocracy, the paradox of self-constraint, which implies that the subject is at the same time active and passive. Finally, the opposition between public and private use of reason also seems paradoxical, since private use seems to be a prejudiced use (and it is not, actually) while public use seems to be free and reasonable as such (although the freedom implied in Enlightenment is only methodical and is subject to rules).

**Keywords:** Kant, philosophy of Enligthenment, paradoxes, heautocracy, private/public use of reason

**Resumo:** Este artigo compõe-se de duas partes. Na primeira parte (seção 1), exporei o conceito kantiano de paradoxo e os seus três significados, quer dizer, o antropológico, o retórico e o metafísico. Na segunda parte (seções 2-6), analisarei a presença desses três significados do paradoxo nos textos de Kant sobre o Iluminismo (com especial atenção à *Beantwortung*). O paradoxo da imaturidade consiste no fato de nós sermos responsáveis da saída dele, como seres humanos, a não-responsáveis, como sujeitos do Estado. Outra formulação do mesmo paradoxo, mas em termos dinâmicos e metafísicos (que ocuparão especificamente a seção 3) refere-se à heautocrácia, o paradoxo da autocoação, que comporta que o sujeito é ao mesmo tempo ativo e passivo. Finalmente, a oposição entre uso público e privado da razão parece também paradoxico, pois o uso privado parece ser maléfico (apesar de não o ser em verdade), enquanto o uso público parece ser livre e razoável em si mesmo, embora a liberdade implicada no Iluminismo é apenas metódica e sujeita a regras.

**Palavras-chave:** Kant, filosofia do Iluminismo, paradoxos, heautocrácia, uso privado da razão, uso público da razão

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