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Ciceronian Fallibilism in Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason:*
A Rhetorical Theory of Justification of Belief
in the Modern Critique of Metaphysics

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B.A. Universidad Javeriana, 1993
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An abstract of a dissertation submitted to the
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The main thesis of this work is that Kant's critique of metaphysics in the *Critique of Pure Reason* shows traces of a fallibilistic theory of the justification of belief that originated in the ancient Hellenistic confluence between rhetoric and Academic skepticism. This confluence is best presented in Marcus Tullius Cicero's (106-43 B.C.) epistemological treatise—the *Academica*.

By fallibilism in this context, I understand a theory of truth that recognizes the difficulties of attaining knowledge, denies certainty, and recommends instead holding probable or persuasive claims in order to conduct life practically. Kant retrieves some of the teachings of Cicero's Academic fallibilism in his undertaking a critique of metaphysical claims. In his "Dialectic of Pure Reason," especially in the section entitled "the Antinomies of Pure Reason," Kant offers a critique of metaphysics that makes use of skeptical strategies but goes beyond the results of skepticism. Kant's position, in my opinion, provides a plausible solution to a fundamental problem, both rhetorical and philosophical: when is it legitimate to believe in something that we do not know? And what kind of justification can these beliefs have?

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Abbreviations

References of the following works appear in abbreviated form, in parentheses and followed by standard numeration. For example: (A II, 24-26) refers to *Academica*, Book I, section 24 to 26. Citations to *Kant's Critique of Pure Reason* are only followed by standard numeration as in (A133/B172), although sometimes the abbreviation in used in the text.

Works by Aristotle:

NE	*Nicomachean Ethics*
P	*Poetics*
PrA	*Prior Analytics*
R	*Rhetoric*
T	*Topics*

Works by Cicero:

A	*Academica*
DF	*De Finibus*
DI	*De Inventione*
DND	*De Natura Deorum*
DO	*De Oratore*
T	*Topics*
TD	*Tusculan Disputations*

Works by Kant:

CJ	*Critique of the Power of Judgment*
CPR	*Critique of Pure Reason*
CPPR	*Critique of Pure Practical Reason*
GW	*Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals*
LL	*Lectures on Logic*
MM	*Metaphysics of Morals*
P	*Prolegomena to Any Future Metaphysics*

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Introduction:

Rhetoric, Fallibilism and The Modern Critique of Metaphysics

The main thesis of this work is that Kant's critique of metaphysics in the *Critique of Pure Reason* shows traces of a fallibilistic theory of the justification of belief that originated in the ancient Hellenistic confluence between rhetoric and Academic skepticism. This confluence is best presented in Marcus Tullius Cicero's (106-43 B.C.) epistemological treatise—the *Academica.*

By fallibilism in this context, I understand a theory of truth that recognizes the difficulties of attaining knowledge, denies certainty, and recommends instead holding probable or persuasive claims in order to conduct life practically. Fallibilism distances itself from skepticism in that it does not deny the possibility of knowledge, and it does not recommend the complete suspension of belief *(epochê)* in order to attain peace of mind (*ataraxia*). It also separates itself from dogmatism, in that it acknowledges the limits of human reason, denies certainty, and ascribes value to the domains of mere belief and opinion.[1]

This theory first developed in the New Platonic Academy of Carneades of Cyrene (214-129 B.C.) and is, in my opinion, the result of the confluence between a strong philosophical *skeptical* tradition that begins with the Middle Academy of Arcesilaus of Pitane (316-240 B.C.) and a

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[1] In this sense, perhaps the best example of dogmatism is Descartes' attitude concerning belief in the *Discourse on Method*, where he states that he will not hold as true any judgment that does not constitute clear and distinct knowledge, i.e., he will not have mere beliefs or opinions.

strong *rhetorical* tradition that begins with the Roman appropriation of the Greek sophistic and Aristotelian *technê* of discourse, and finds its best expression in the rhetorical figure of Cicero.

This confluence is a fortunate fact in the history of philosophical ideas, but not one that was easy to accomplish. In fact, rhetoric and skepticism seem to be two very opposite discursive activities.[2] The first aims at convincing or persuading others that something known or believed by someone (i.e., the rhetorician) is actually the case, while the second aims at refuting that something can be known by anyone to be the case, and consequently, recommends suspending any belief on the matter. The aim of rhetoric is, thus, the *formation and transmission of beliefs*, while the aim of skepticism is the *refutation and withholding of any sort of belief*. How can these two opposite attitudes toward knowledge claims and/or beliefs be reconciled?

At the core of the problem, there lies the ancient Greek dispute between Plato and the sophists concerning the status of rhetoric as a legitimate political activity. Roughly stated, the sophists held the mitigated, not yet full-fledged skeptical view that since truth is unattainable, rhetoric serves to settle disputes on the basis of more or less convincing arguments. In turn, Plato's position was much more complex—it is highly dependent on the interpretation given to the most important dialogues in question, *Gorgias* and *Phaedrus*. If, on the one hand, Plato's posture in these dialogues is to be taken dogmatically, that is, if we consider that Socrates expounds in them Plato's doctrine in a more or less positive fashion (which seems to be more the fact of the *Phaedrus* than the *Gorgias*) then, truth is only available to the philosopher, and rhetoric is an unnecessary, ill-intended practice. If, on the other hand, the guideline of the

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[2] Unlike modern skepticism, ancient skepticism cannot be considered as a philosophical doctrine. It is just a manner of using discourse, i.e., a discursive activity that aims to the refutation of any knowledge claim and to the subsequent suspension of belief.

interpretation is the Socratic method, or *elenchus*, and Plato's Socrates is thus interpreted as a father of skepticism (in addition to Pyrrho), the original opposition between rhetoric and skepticism clearly arises: "Since I only know that I don't know"—this skeptical Socrates would say—"I don't believe anything." The philosopher ought to suspend judgment, and the rhetorician is guilty of imparting false beliefs to the less critically minded population. In both interpretations, Plato's position becomes a frontal attack on rhetoric, on the grounds that it recommends transmitting 'false' beliefs—which are false because truth is either unattainable or only philosophically accessible.

Although this dichotomous way of interpreting Plato's dialogues is somehow foreign to us, the Hellenistic philosophical world was, in fact, divided into these two main viewpoints. The Stoics upheld the dogmatic view, while the Academics advocated the skeptical characterization of Plato's Socrates. Consequently, both the Stoa and the Middle Academy –that is, the most decidedly skeptical Academy under the rule of Arcesilaus of Pitane— harshly criticized rhetorical practice.[3]

However, at some point around the second century B.C., the Hellenistic *ethos*, with its very practically oriented understanding of philosophy, seems to have undertaken a reconciliation of rhetoric and Platonism through the means of a new mitigated form of skepticism—i.e., the fallibilism of the New Academy, under the guidance of Carneades of Cyrene. Paradoxically, this sort of skepticism, which calls itself "Platonic," seems to bring to the fore once again a position that represents more closely the sophistical viewpoint—the idea that even though truth is elusive, some beliefs are more credible and are worth being held and transmitted. The corollary

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[3] See Charles Brittain, *Philo of Larissa: The Last of the Academic Sceptics* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), and Catherine Atherton, "Hand over Fist: The Failure of Stoic Rhetoric" *The Classical Quarterly* 38 (1988): 392-427.

of this position in regards to rhetoric becomes obvious. Rhetoric is the art of finding, examining and transmitting such beliefs; its activity is therefore not only legitimate but also highly necessary. Understood as such, rhetoric merges with philosophy into one sole epistemic and practical activity. This is the stance that sophists like Isocrates (and perhaps also Gorgias) held before Socrates had "severed the tongue from the brain," as Cicero claims, by separating the domains of philosophy and rhetoric. It seems that the New Academy of Carneades, as depicted by Cicero's *Academica*, finally achieved if not a complete reunification of both disciplines, at least an understanding of them that reconciled their interests and disciplinary pretensions.

The two main important teachings of this fallibilistic doctrine are, first, a refutation of (Stoic) dogmatism on the basis that no sense presentation is a sufficient ground for certainty—even though truth is to be sought, we can never claim with certainty to have attained true knowledge. And second, a positive characterization of knowledge on the basis of probable sense data. The doctrine provides a set of criteria to determine which sense presentations are more credible than others and to establish a gradation of judgments according to their approximation to truth. Some presentations are to be held as "knowledge," others as "belief" and others as "opinion." It also offers an interesting account of the psychological attitudes attached to each sort of claim. The attitude corresponding to knowledge claims or theoretical beliefs is characterized as "assent," while the one that corresponds to practical beliefs and opinions is considered to be "approval."

Kant, to be sure, is not interested in rhetoric and its epistemological foundations. Neither does he hold a probabilistic theory of knowledge for scientific research. First of all, for Kant, rhetoric is just an "art of deceiving with beautiful appearance" (*CJ*, 5:327) and it deserves neither moral respect nor philosophical examination. As an enlightened thinker, Kant shares the modern

prejudice against rhetoric and the Cartesian ideal of a natural and rational "eloquence," divested of any oratorical pretensions, which possesses the merit that traditional oratory lacks. Second, Kant's theory of knowledge which is mostly developed in the first part of his *Critique of Pure Reason* –the "Analytic"— provides the basis for an understanding of experiential knowledge claims, based on the *a priori* principles of reason (i.e., the categories), that allows for certainty in scientific knowledge. Thus, Kant is not, strictly speaking, an empirical or scientific fallibilist, as was for example, Hume.[4]

However, when it comes to undertaking a critique of metaphysical claims, Kant retrieves some of the teachings of Cicero's Academic fallibilism. In his "Dialectic of Pure Reason," especially in the section entitled "the Antinomies of Pure Reason," Kant offers a critique of metaphysics that makes use of skeptical strategies but goes beyond the results of skepticism (i.e., Pyrrhonism or Middle Academic skepticism). Kant uses the dialectical method of arguing a thesis and its antithesis in order to show how, given the equal validity of opposing metaphysical claims, reason ought to renounce any pretension of knowledge beyond the sphere of experience. But Kant also recognizes that, even if metaphysical claims can never be counted as knowledge, they may be justifiably held as beliefs for practical reasons. Believing, for example, that the soul is immortal and that God exists are fundamental moral incentives—to withhold them as skepticism recommends is not practically advisable.

Kant's distinction between believing something theoretically and believing it practically, i.e., for practical reasons, evokes the fallibilistic attitude concerning belief in Cicero's *Academica.* In

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[4] Hume's famous view that our causal claims are based on probability makes him an empirical or scientific fallibilist. This attitude is not shared by Kant, who considers causality to be an *a priori* principle of reason, providing certainty to our experiential claims. See Chapter II, n. 34, p. 63 and Chapter III, pp. 80-81.

my view, the critical (but not altogether skeptical) attitude that Academic fallibilism recommends finds an important development in this aspect of Kant's thought. Only by retrieving Cicero's fallibilistic attitude was Kant able to situate himself between the extremes of rational dogmatism (Wolffian or Leibnizian) and empiricist skepticism (Berkeleyan and, to some extent, Humean), which seemed to be the only possible philosophical options of his time.

Moreover, Kant's "Dialectic of Pure Reason," in particular his treatment of the antinomies, interestingly takes the form of a trial, in which metaphysics, says Kant, submits itself to the "tribunal of reason" (Axii). The classical interpretation of the *Critique* makes much of this metaphor, but it tends to forget that for a trial to occur, there need to be not only judges but lawyers as well. Kant, even if stressing in the dispute the role of the judge—who determines the apparent undecidability of the case and imparts the only possible solution, i.e., his doctrine of transcendental idealism— also takes into account the role of the lawyer or rhetorician. In a section subsequent to the antinomies entitled "The Interests of Reason in these Disputes," Kant shows how, in arguing in favor or against every metaphysical claim, the partisans of the dispute allege grounds that are not purely speculative, but rather appeal to reason's practical interests. In other words, Kant recognizes that in order to overcome skepticism concerning metaphysics (without falling into dogmatism), it is necessary to examine the natural persuasiveness of each claim in the way a rhetorician would do it.

Finally, Kant's characterization of a practical belief in his "Doctrine of Method" shares much of Cicero's psychological characterization of "approval." In my view, although Cicero's approval corresponds mainly to the attitude attached to holding opinions, Kant elaborates this attitude and offers a typology of claims according to the force of their corresponding

psychological states into "subjective practical beliefs" and "subjective practical opinions." The former constitute the necessary metaphysical beliefs that further moral action.

Cicero's ideas may have reached Kant in different ways. One possible way is Kant's direct acquaintance with Cicero's works. Witnesses to this acquaintance are Kant's many references in his own work to Cicero, especially to his rhetorical skill, and his moral Stoic doctrine, as expounded in *De Officiis*. Kant, in fact, as Manfred Kühn affirms, "knew Cicero well."[5] However, among the many references to Cicero in his *Gesammelte Schriften,* none point directly to Cicero's theory of justification of belief in the *Academica*. Moreover, in some of these references, Kant dismisses Cicero's rhetorical expertise and philosophical ability. He derides Cicero's bombastic style and considers his politics as morally unscrupulous. However, this does not mean that he could not be indebted to Cicero's epistemology, just as he was to his ethics. It only means that Kant does not give it sufficient credit.

It is also possible to consider that Cicero's fallibilist viewpoint reached Kant through the works of David Hume. Hume, wrongly interpreted by the philosophical tradition as a "modern Pyrrhonist," constantly expresses his allegiance to Academic skepticism. He acknowledges this tradition as the source of his own "mitigated" form of skepticism in his *Inquiry Concerning Human Understanding*. Hume also proves to be a good connoisseur of rhetorical issues and a modern champion of the Ciceronian cause of an "eloquent philosophy." His mitigated skepticism or, I would say, fallibilism, can be appreciated both in his characterization of causal claims as only probable, and in his adoption of a "speculative skepticism" concerning metaphysical claims. It is

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[5] Manfred Kühn, "Kant and Cicero" in *Kant und die Berliner Aufklärung. Akten des IX Internationalen Kant-Kongresses* 3 (2001): 270.

this latter aspect of Hume's Academic fallibilism that can be found in Kant's critique of metaphysics.

Although Hume's influence on Kant has been much discussed, the analyses usually focus on Hume's arguments on causality and the irrationality of moral judgment, which Kant respectively rejects in the "Analytic" of the *Critique of Pure Reason* and in his practical philosophy, i.e., the *Groundwork of the* Metaphysics *of Morals* and the *Critique of Practical Reason.* However, Hume's "speculative skepticism", in my view, importantly shaped Kant's attitude and treatment of metaphysics. The fact that in the *Prolegomena to Any Future Metaphysics* and in the *Correspondence* Kant attributes his "awakening from the metaphysical slumber" both to Hume and to the "discovery of the antinomies"[6] gives us reasons to reconsider the scope of Hume's impact on Kant's writing of the first *Critique*—the Scottish philosopher inspired not only many of the discussions of the "Analytic" but also the central issues of the "Dialectic."

In the present investigation I develop a more detailed exposition of this general account. Accordingly, in Chapter I, I offer an exploration of Kant's relation to rhetoric and Cicero's work. I attempt there to find the roots of Kant's enlightened prejudice against rhetoric, and I give a state-of-the-art description of the scholarly discussion about the recently acknowledged influence of Cicero's *De Officiis* on Kant's writing of the *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals.* In chapter II, I relate Cicero's Academic fallibilism with the rhetorical tradition of Isocrates and Aristotle. I argue that the notion of "probability" that is central to Carneadean, New Academic fallibilism has a rhetorical origin. Chapter III offers a first approach to Kant's characterization of skepticism and to his adoption of skeptical strategies. I discuss Kant's references to skepticism in

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[6] See Kant, *Correspondence*, 12:258 and *Prolegomena,* 4:260.

the *Lectures on Logic* in relation to his description of "dialectic" as a transcendental method in his introduction to the "Dialectic of Pure Reason." I claim that, even though Kant seems to consider Pyrrhonian skepticism as the most adequate method to undermine metaphysical dogmatic claims, in truth, he adopts the skeptical strategies used by Academic skepticism. Chapter IV comprises the core of my argumentation. There, I re-create Kant's use of dialectical or skeptical strategies in the "Antinomies of Pure Reason" and show how, in order to avoid *epochê* concerning these issues, Kant introduces the consideration of the "interests of reason." This I consider to be the best expression of an Academic fallibilistic attitude in Kant's critique of metaphysics. In the last chapter, I examine two sections of the "Doctrine of Method," namely, the "Polemical Use of Reason" and "The Canon of Pure Reason," where Kant describes more accurately the conditions of a practically held belief. As a conclusion, I offer some remarks regarding the fallibilistic attitude towards metaphysical claims, in relation to rhetoric and enlightened thought.

There is much to learn from Kant's view that it is necessary for human beings to hold certain metaphysical beliefs practically, even if they involve theoretical uncertainty. Kant's position, in my opinion, provides a plausible solution to a fundamental problem, both rhetorical and philosophical: when is it legitimate to believe in something that we do not know? And what kind of justification can these beliefs have? In his everyday practice, the rhetorician attempts to give particular answers to these questions. A more thorough philosophical answer, based on Kant's indications, should be the subject of a future and deeper inquiry.

Chapter I

From Kant to Cicero:

Truthful Eloquence vs. Deceitful Oratory

> This is the source from which has sprung the undoubtedly absurd and unprofitable and reprehensible severance between the tongue and the brain, leading to our having one set of professors to teach us to think and another to teach us to speak.
>
> Cicero, *De Oratore*

The relationship between Kant and Cicero is not immediately apparent. Kant does not show for Cicero the sort of admiration that he does for renowned ancient and modern predecessors, such as Plato or Leibniz. His attitude towards the philosophical significance of the Roman philosopher is rather contemptuous,[1] and while he respects Cicero's literary qualities, he disapproves of his political behavior and rhetorical grandiloquence.

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[1] This is not only the opinion of Kant. It suffices to read some of the introductions to Cicero's works in the Loeb Classical Library to confirm that Cicero has been traditionally held in very low esteem as a philosopher. *De Officiis*, for example, is presented as follows: "… [*De Officiis*] has the master's brilliant style but is full of repetitions and rhetorical flourishes, and it fails often in logical order and power; it rings true in its moral tone, but it shows in what haste and distraction it was composed; for it was not written as a contribution to close scientific thinking, it was written as a means of occupation and diversion" (*DO*, xiv). The same may be said of the introduction to *De Natura Deorum*, where H. Rackham says: "[Cicero's] method was unambitious: he took some recent handbook of one or another of the leading schools of philosophy and reproduced it in Latin; but he set passages of continuous

Moreover, Kant's valuation of the art of rhetoric as a whole is decidedly negative. He does not share Hume or Baumgarten's esteem for the rhetorical tradition, but rather holds the opinion that rhetoric is a deceptive art that curtails the audience's free capacity to judge. This opinion situates Kant among the modern detractors of rhetoric, side by side with philosophers such as Descartes and Locke.[2]

It seems reasonable, then, to consider Kant and Cicero as two completely unrelated figures of Western thought. I believe, however, that the relation between the two thinkers deserves a more careful consideration. In fact, it has been argued that Kant read Cicero with interest, both in his younger years, as a high school student of Latin, and in his mature ones, when he was in the process of writing his *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals.* Cicero's presentation of Stoic morals deeply influenced Kant's approach to morality.[3] Moreover, there are more than twenty entries of Cicero's name in Kant's *Gesammelte Schriften,* especially in his *Lectures on Logic.* This is not to be underestimated, considering that Kant does not refer by name to many authors in his works. Indeed, the relationship is not as simple as it appears at first glance—rather, there are

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exposition in a frame of dialogue, and he added illustrations from Roman history and poetry. …But to learning and enthusiasm he did not add depth of insight or scientific precision" (*DND*, xii).

[2] Most accounts of the history of rhetoric support this claim. See, for example, Thomas M. Conley, who affirms: "The challenge to rhetoric in Germany was strongly made by Immanuel Kant in his third *Critique,* in 1790." T. M. Conley, *Rhetoric in the European Tradition* (Chicago-London: The University of Chicago Press, 1990), 244. See also George Kennedy, *Classical Rhetoric and its Christian and Secular Traditions from Ancient to Modern Times* (Chapel Hill-London: University of North Carolina Press, 1999), 269-274.

[3] The similarities between Cicero's and Kant's formulations of moral duty are, indeed, striking. In *De Finibus*, Cicero presents the Stoic view of duty in order to refute the Epicurean doctrine of happiness: "by 'moral,' then, I mean that which can justly be esteemed on its own account, independently of any utility, and of any reward or profit that may accrue" (*DF* II, 45). In the same vein, Kant argues: "… an action from duty has its moral worth *not in the purpose* to be attained by it, but in the maxim in accordance with which it is decided upon, and therefore does not depend upon the realization of the object of the action, but merely upon the *principle of volition* in accordance with which the action is done without regard for any object of the faculty of desire" (*GW,* 4:399-400, Kant's emphasis).

interesting clues suggesting that Cicero's influence on Kant may have been greater than is usually believed.

In this chapter, I intend to explore this relationship by presenting an interpretation of Kant's attitude towards both the art of rhetoric and Cicero's writings. In the first part, I make explicit the roots of Kant's distrust of rhetoric, especially of the kind of rhetorical enterprise that Cicero represents. With this purpose, I interpret Kant's commentaries concerning rhetoric in the *Critique of Judgment* in light of the Cartesian view of rhetoric that dominated the philosophical scene during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. After this, I indicate the epistemological considerations that lie beneath this modern view of rhetoric, and those that would rather endorse a rhetoric of Ciceronian characteristics.

In the second part of the chapter, Kant's personal and intellectual relationship with the works of Cicero is examined. There has been some scholarly debate about the influence that Christian Garve's translation of *De Officiis* may have had on Kant's writing of the *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals*. I review this discussion as a state-of-the-art account on the relationship between Kant and Cicero.[4] As a conclusion, I argue that, in view of Kant's interest in Cicero's ethics, there is no reason to believe that Kant did not also read Cicero's epistemology – specifically his *Academica*– or at least, little reason to believe that he was unaware of the type skepticism that Cicero depicts in this work.

[4] However, since my main concern is not Cicero's influence on Kant's ethics but rather his influence on Kant's epistemology, I do not take the discussion further.

1. **Kant and Rhetoric**

In the *Critique of Judgment,* Kant states his opinion concerning oratory. It seems to be a very straightforward opinion—a purely negative account, which leads the reader to the conclusion that Kant had only contempt for the art of speaking. In a nutshell, oratory is for Kant an art "unworthy of any respect whatsoever" that "cannot be recommended either for the courtroom, or for the pulpit" (*CJ*, 5:327).

Besides, Kant does not seem to be any sort of accomplished orator. In spite of the clarity exhibited in his pre-critical writings, the obscurity and dryness of the *Critiques* is usually considered to be Kant's characteristic style. Kant himself apologizes in many places for his lack of a more vivid expression.[5] Nonetheless, Kant is skilled enough in the art of speaking to know when to abandon his philosophical sobriety and let his wit operate more freely.[6] Even if not intentionally designing his investigation to be persuasive, Kant's dryness of style is many times softened by the introduction of analogies, anecdotes, and other rhetorical devices.[7]

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[5] For instance, in the "Preface to the First Edition" of the *Critique of Pure Reason*, Kant regrets not using as many examples as it would be necessary in order to endow the work not only with "conceptual clarity" but also with "intuitive or aesthetic clarity" (Axviii). The latter, he says, would be necessary for the popularization of his philosophy. In the "Preface to the Second Edition," Kant once again acknowledges his stylistic inability, and insinuates that he would be greatly pleased if his followers would bring to his philosophy the elegance with which he has not been able to endow it: "To these deserving men, who combine well-groundedness of insight so fortunately with the talent for a lucid presentation (something I am conscious of not having myself), I leave it to complete my treatment, which is perhaps defective here and there in this latter regard" (Bxliii). A likely comment appears in one of Kant's letters to Herz: "... it takes a writer of greater distinction and eloquence than mine to move his readers to exert themselves to reflect on his writing." Letter to Herz, February 21, 1772, in I. Kant, *Correspondence*, 10:133.

[6] The stern picture of a rationalistic, punctilious and quasi-stoic Kant has been sufficiently softened in recent biographical accounts. More and more, we have access to a Kant who is prone to attending salons and who loves playing the host—in one word, a socially active Kant, well skilled in conducting witty and courteous conversation. See Manfred Kühn, *Kant: a Biography* (UK: Cambridge University Press, 2001).

[7] As Herman Parret argues: "… La rhétorique chez Kant—rhétorique qu'il ne cesse de condamner—est plus qu'un supplément de surface: elle est une véritable méthode …" H. Parret, "La rhetorique: heuristique et methode chez

This is precisely the case in his valuation of oratory in the *Third Critique*. The passage involves much more than the simple statement of Kant's distrust for rhetoric. It is subtle, many-sided, and it says much about the general attitude of modern philosophy towards the art of rhetoric. Let us look at it in some detail.

1.1. *Oratory vs. Rhetoric*

In his classification of the fine arts, Kant defines oratory as an "art of speech" that ranks as a counterpart to poetry:

> Oratory *(Beredsamkeit)* is the art of conducting a business of the understanding as a free play of the imagination; poetry that of carrying out a free play of the imagination as a business of the understanding ... The orator thus, certainly provides something, which he does not promise, namely an entertaining play of the imagination; but he also takes something away from what he does promise, namely the purposive occupation of the understanding. The poet, by contrast, promises little and announces a mere play with ideas, but accomplishes something that is worthy of business, namely providing nourishment to the understanding in play, and giving life to its concepts through the imagination: hence the former basically provides less than he promises, the latter more (*CJ*, 5:321).

Kant's distinction between oratory and poetry is very ingenious. Oratory engages the imagination, although it announces itself as if engaging the understanding. Poetry, in contrast, engages the understanding while presenting itself as if engaging the imagination. Their difference concerns the relation between what they promise and what they actually produce. Oratory produces a mere play of images, although it promises a play of concepts. Poetry also produces a play of concepts, although it promises only a play of images. Since concepts are naturally

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Kant" in *Figures et Conflits Rhetoriques,* Michel Meyer and Alain Lempereur eds. (Bruxelles: Université de Bruxelles, 1990), 104.

superior to images, oratory promises more than it delivers, whereas poetry promises less. Hence the higher evaluation of poetry over rhetoric.

We cannot but grant to Kant that this description of oratory is very *persuasive*. It is based on a vivid, forceful and well-rounded analogy—a completely symmetric comparison, with which we tend to agree for the most part. Don't we disrespect the shameless gravity of orators, their cunning train of thought? We do, and we are happy to read that Kant does too.

However, Kant is not simply enunciating a common opinion (or, let us say it: a prejudice) in this paragraph. His analogy is so conceptually challenging that it activates the reader's thought, engaging it in the analysis of the issue. The reader continues to reflect on the merits of the art, and sooner or later realizes that, as a matter of fact, not only is oratory arrogant and announces more than it gives, but it is also deceitful and crafty—in a word, immoral. Once the reader arrives at this conclusion, which is merely intimated by the analogy, Kant offers its confirmation:

> Oratory[8] *[Beredsamkeit],* insofar as by that is understood the art of persuasion *[überreden]*, i.e., of deceiving by means of beautiful illusion (as *ars oratoria*), and not merely skill in speaking *[Wohlredenheit]* (eloquence and style) is a dialectic, which borrows from the art of poetry only as much as is necessary to win the minds over to the advantage of the speaker before they can judge and to rob them from their freedom; thus it cannot be recommended either for the courtroom, or for the pulpit (*CJ*, 5:327).

With the first definition of the business of oratory in contrast to that of poetry, Kant prepares the ground for this second and more disparaging characterization of oratory. In this paragraph, the previously established status of oratory as a fine art becomes doubtful.[9] First,

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[8] Although I am following P. Guyer and A. Wood's translation, I replace here the word "rhetoric" for "oratory" in order to give a more homogeneous translation to Kant's German term *Beredsamkeit*.

[9] The condition of an art to be beautiful or fine, according to Kant, is that it brings about aesthetic pleasure: "... since it is in regard to [genius] that an art deserves to be called inspired, but only in regard to [taste] that it deserves

oratory is depicted here as a *dialectic*—i.e., the surreptitious employment of reason's ideas, which naturally entice us into making unlawful metaphysical claims. Within the system of Kantian philosophy, nothing could be more derogatory than being called "dialectical." For, according to Kant, even if the beautiful arts do not bring about cognition, at least they do not deceive. But this is precisely what dialectic does.

Second, Kant argues here that oratory only pleases in virtue of what it "borrows" from poetry. It seems now that oratory is not analogous to poetry, as Kant had affirmed initially, but that it is some sort of dialectical activity *disguised* as poetry, and whose aesthetic value depends on what it takes (illegitimately, as we might expect) from poetry.

If oratory's aesthetic value is put into question as being both borrowed from poetry and subservient to deceptive metaphysical enterprises, what is left of its status as an art? Nothing, it seems. Following Plato's insight, Kant could have as well defined oratory as a mere practice or "knack," instead of an art.[10]

However, the latter passage contains more than this harsh criticism of oratory. In it, Kant also makes an important caveat: "Insofar as by oratory is understood the art of persuasion (*überreden*), i.e., of deceiving by means of beautiful illusion," it does not have any value. But it could also be understood differently—that is, as *Wohlredenheit*, i.e., well-spokenness or eloquence—in which case, says Kant, it would have some merit.

The caveat is expanded in the following footnote:

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to be called a beautiful art, the latter, at least as an indispensable condition (*conditio sine qua non*) is thus the primary thing to which one must look in the judging of an art as beautiful art" (*CJ,* 5:319).

[10] See Plato, *Gorgias*, 465 b-e. However, this is not Plato's view in the *Phaedrus*, where he advocates for a genuine art of rhetoric or philosophical rhetoric, based on dialectical guidelines. The rhetoric that Plato considers a "knack" is the sophistic kind. T. M. Conley argues that Kant, following the *Gorgias,* not only undermines the possibility that rhetoric be an art, but also that it be a science. See T. M. Conley, *Rhetoric in the European Tradition,* 244.

> Eloquence and well-spokenness *[Beredheit and Wohlredenheit]* (together, rhetoric) *[zusammen Rhetorik]* belong to beautiful art; but the art of the orator (*ars oratoria*), as the art of using the weakness of people for one's own purpose (however well intentioned or even really good this may be) is not worthy of any respect at all (*CJ*, 5:327-328).

Once again, Kant's rhetorical ability is displayed. He activates the reader's thought so as to make a rather sensible inference: "After all," one readily thinks, "what is wrong about cultivating one's capacity to speak? But manipulating by means of speech... that is inadmissible!" However, Kant places the qualification in a footnote, perhaps in order to not give it too much weight. What are his reasons for doing this? Is the footnote merely a polite consideration? Or some understated "damage control"? Be as it may, the footnote is extremely interesting in order to have a more nuanced idea of Kant's deeper attitude concerning rhetoric.

Kant's contrast is based on a terminological distinction. On the one hand, there is the manipulative **art of oratory** (*Beredsamkeit*), and on the other, the ability to speak well (*Wohlredenheit*), which, together with eloquence (*Beredheit*) and style *(Stil)* constitutes the positively evaluated **art of rhetoric** *(Rhetorik)*. Thus, the art that Kant dismisses is ultimately "oratory" and not "rhetoric."

We may illustrate this contrast in the following way:

Oratory	**Rhetoric**
Dialectic and Pseudo-Poetry	Eloquence and Style
Negatively Valued	Positively Valued

Now, what is this second art of seemingly sober speaking? Whose eloquence is this?

Kant explains:

> He who has at his command along with clear insight into the facts, language in all its richness and purity, and who, along with a fruitful imagination capable of presenting his ideas, feels a lively

> sympathy for the true good, is the *vir bonus dicendi peritus*, the speaker without art but full of vigor, as Cicero would have him, though he did not himself always remain true to this ideal (*CJ*, 5:327-328).

The speaker who has true knowledge, strong imagination, sympathy for the good, spontaneity and vigor, and the command of rich and pure language is the *vir bonus dicendi peritus*—the ideal orator that Cicero wanted to match, even though (Kant adds *en passant)* he fell short of it. This *vir bonus dicendi peritus* incarnates Kant's ideal of a "non-oratorical rhetoric"—the one that truly deserves respect.

The question that arises after reading this passage is why, if this rhetoric is, as it were, the *real* one, did not Kant refer to it from the beginning, in his classification of the fine arts? Moreover, why does Kant identify Cicero with the art of "oratory" and not with "rhetoric"? And who, if not Cicero, would be a good example of the *vir bonus dicendi peritus*, the eloquent and morally good man?

1.2. *The* vir bonus dicendi peritus

Cicero not only strove, as Kant affirms, to achieve in his life the ideal of an accomplished orator, but he also described that ideal in many of his works, particularly in his main treatise on rhetoric, *De Oratore.* A good, brief characterization of the ideal appears at the introduction of the dialogue, where Cicero explains why the art of oratory is so difficult to master:

> ... a knowledge of many matters must be grasped, without which oratory is but an empty and ridiculous swirl of verbiage; and the distinctive style has to be formed, not only by the choice of words but also by the arrangement of the same; and all the mental emotions, with which nature has endowed the human race, are to be intimately understood, because it is in calming or kindling the audience that the full power and science of oratory are to be brought into play. To this there should be added a certain humor, flashes of wit, the culture befitting a gentleman, and readiness and courage in repelling and in delivering the attack, the whole being combined with delicate charm and urbanity. Further, the complete history of the past and a store of precedents must be

> retained in memory, nor may the knowledge of civil law be omitted. And why should I go on to describe the speaker's delivery? That needs to be controlled by bodily carriage, gesture, play of features and changing intonation of voice... (*DO* I, 17-18).

The Ciceronian ideal is not completely analogous to Kant's version of the *vir bonus*. Although both Cicero and Kant give to knowledge an important role in eloquence and both are deeply concerned with the moral qualities of the orator, Kant's model is rather austere in comparison to Cicero's. According to Cicero, good oratory requires not only the mastering of pure and rich language but the development of a "distinctive style." The orator ought to have both fruitful imagination and knowledge of the human emotions in order to be able to stir or soothe them as the occasion demands. He should, moreover, have wit and urbanity as well as assertiveness to confront his adversary when necessary; and finally, he should possess the memory and bodily control of an actor.

None of the latter characteristics would be commended by Kant. Arousing the emotions, attacking the adversary, and behaving as an actor would be in complete contradiction with the *artless* speech and manners that Kant sees as eloquence and well-spokenness. Whence, then, comes Kant's ideal of the *vir bonus* if not from Cicero?

The origin of the expression *vir bonus dicendi peritus* is attributed to Cato the Elder by Quintilian:

> The orator then, whom I am concerned to form, shall be the orator as defined by Marcus Cato, "a good man, skilled in speaking." But above all he must possess the quality which Cato places first and which is in the very nature of things the greatest and most important, that is, he must be a good man.[11]

[11] Quintilian. *Institutio Oratoria*, XII.1.1.

Quintilian endorses this definition of the orator and his art—a definition that is not only the invention of Cato the Elder but has also a Stoic source:

> The definition which best suits its real character is that which makes rhetoric the *science of speaking well.* For this definition includes all the virtues of oratory and the character of the orator as well, since no man can speak well who is not good himself. The definition given by Chrysippus, who derived it from Cleanthes, to the effect that it is the *science of speaking rightly,* amounts to the same thing.[12]

Kant's characterization of the ideal orator and with it, of genuine and valuable rhetoric, generally accords with this Stoic ideal of the *vir bonus dicendi peritus.*[13] It stresses both the moral character of the orator and the ability to speak well. However, Kant's *vir bonus* is not identical to this ideal, as Quintilian (along with the Stoics) does not consider that eloquence is completely *artlessly or spontaneously* achieved. After all, Quintilian was primarily an educator. In his *Institutio Oratoria* he compiled the sort of rules of proper speech that the "artless" orator would shun as useless. The goal of classical rhetorical education is precisely the internalization, through rhetorical exercises, of the rules of proper speech so that the *vir bonus dicendi peritus* enacts them, as it were, "artlessly" or "spontaneously." The *vir bonus,* as the motto indicates, is an "expert" (*peritus*) in speaking (*dicendi*). This experience is obtained with labor and even though natural talent plays an important role in its acquisition, it is not the only ingredient. Thus, we can say that Kant's description of genuine rhetoric with its emphasis on artlessness is not completely based on Quintilian and the Stoics. There must be one more piece of historical influence taken into Kant's account.

In fact, Kant's understanding and valuation of an *artless genuine rhetoric* as opposed to a *crafty malicious oratory* finds its origin in the Cartesian adaptation of the Stoic ideal. Descartes' valuation

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[12] Quintilian. *Institutio Oratoria*, II.15. 34-35.

[13] In turn, this Stoic ideal is a development of Plato's views about "genuine rhetoric" in the *Phaedrus.*

of rhetoric has the Stoic overtones of the doctrine of the *vir bonus*, plus some of the other characteristics that Kant also mentions, such as *clarity* of language and *artlessness* in speaking.

The passage in the *Discourse on Method* in which Descartes refers his education in rhetoric expresses well this view:

> I esteemed eloquence highly, and was in raptures with poetry; but I thought that both were gifts of nature rather than fruits of study. Those in whom the faculty of reason is predominant, and who most skillfully dispose their thoughts with a view to render them clear and intelligible, are always the best able to persuade others of the truth of what they lay down, though they should speak only in the language of Lower Brittany, and be wholly ignorant of the rules of rhetoric; and those whose minds are stored with the most agreeable fancies, and who can give expression to them with the greatest embellishment and harmony, are still the best poets, though unacquainted with the art of poetry.[14]

Descartes thinks that eloquence does not need the embellishing devices of rhetorical art. Although it can result from the cultivation of talent, this is not a necessary condition—let alone the application of a highly complex technique. For Descartes, genuine rhetoric is a sort of natural eloquence, and the art of rhetoric or oratory is of no importance whatsoever. It is also noticeable that Descartes describes rhetoric in relation to poetry, just as Kant does. Kant seems to be following (along with Descartes) the common canon of classification of the fine arts in seventeenth-century France.[15]

But this short reference to rhetoric in the *Discourse on Method* only provides one facet of Descartes' opinion about rhetoric. His most extensive treatment of the issue occurs in a rather non-philosophical context—a letter of 1628, written precisely as a laudation of the rhetorical

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[14] René Descartes, *Discourse de la Méthode*, VI. 7.

[15] See Hugh M. Davidson, "The Decline of Rhetoric in Seventeenth Century France" in *The History and Philosophy of Rhetoric and Political Discourse,* Kenneth W. Thompson ed., (Lanham-New York-London: University Press of America, 1987), 56-82.

ability of a contemporary writer: Guez de Balzac. Referring to de Balzac's *Letters*, Descartes describes more fully the qualities of what he considers to be "natural eloquence":

> ... [De Balzac's *Letters*] have, in fact, this *purity of language*, which is like health in the human body—we have even more reasons to believe it excellent, when it does not show itself sensibly. They have, also, *elegance and grace*, which are like the beauty in a perfectly handsome woman—it does not consist on this or that particular trait but on the *accord and harmony* of the ensemble. ... [De Balzac] does not abuse the simplicity of the reader, but on the contrary, the arguments he commonly uses are so *clear,* that they easily find credibility before the public, and they are, nonetheless, *so solid and true* that the more the readers have a *good spirit*, the more he will convince them, especially since every time he wants to prove only that of which he has previously persuaded himself. [16]

First, Descartes refers to the artless nature of de Balzac's writings with some very forceful metaphors. Purity of language is an unnoticeable, *natural* excellence, just as health is to the body. Beauty is a harmonious and graceful unity that produces aesthetic pleasure but not pathological upheaval—once again, a completely spontaneous and almost unnoticeable quality. And finally, the interest for the good, along with clarity and truthfulness of the ideas expressed, is the warranty of agreement between orator and audience (or writer and reader). Descartes enumerates here all the features that Kant had identified as central requirements for genuine rhetoric.

Now, the natural counterpart of this ideal of artless rhetoric is a strong disapproval of oratory as an art of deceit. Descartes too considers that rhetoric –as oratory– is pernicious and

[16] R. Descartes, *Correspondance,* I. 7-10. The letter is translated to French in the edition of Ch. Adam and G. Milhaud (Paris: Librairie Felix Alcan, 1936), 30-38. It is unfortunate that I cannot reproduce here the letter in its entirety, for it is a masterful piece of the kind of rhetoric that Descartes praises. English translation and emphasis are mine.

worthy of no respect.[17] Moreover, Descartes attributes the decadence of rhetoric to its popularization in late Republican Rome, precisely during the time in which Cicero lived:

> ... among Greeks and Romans, the debates of the tribunals and the frequency of political discourses have spoiled [eloquence]—they made an abuse of it. It passed to the hands of vulgar personalities who, not expecting to gain the conviction of the auditory in loyal combat and with the sole weapons of truth, made resort to sophisms, to deceits, with words empty of sense... I find them the most wretched of men, for passing as able lawyers only by getting a reputation of dishonest people.[18]

This opinion is also shared by Kant, who writes:

> ...both in Athens and in Rome, [oratory] reached its highest level only at a time when the state was rushing toward its ruin and a truly patriotic way of thinking had been extinguished (*CJ*, 5:327-328).

Interestingly, this account, which is common among philosophers of the eighteenth century, radically disagrees with the one given by historians of rhetoric, who consider that the decadence of Roman eloquence begins later, during the time of the Emperors. As Michael Winterbottom argues, Quintilian's *vir bonus* constitutes precisely a reaction against the pervasive feeling of rhetorical decadence in his time—that is, during the first century C.E. Quintilian evokes Cicero's time as the best epoch of Roman eloquence, when it had reached its highest level of excellence.[19]

But we must take into consideration the fact that, among philosophers of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, any possible argument against oratory is welcome. As Hugh M. Davidson explains, the mistrust of rhetoric in modernity (a mistrust that continues) can be

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[17] "... [Descartes'] distaste for formal rhetoric –one might even say, Descartes' hostility toward it—is now a common place in the study of the European rhetorical tradition." Thomas Carr, *Descartes and the Resilience of Rhetoric* (Carbondale-Edwardsville: Southern Illinois University Press, 1990), 1.

[18] R. Descartes, *Correspondance*, I. 9 (English translation is mine).

[19] See Michael Winterbottom, "Quintilian and the *Vir Bonus*" *The Journal of Roman Studies*, 54 (1964): 90-97.

characterized as a reduction of the concept of rhetoric to its more prominent negative aspects—manipulation and verbosity:

> ... we may remind ourselves of the severe attrition, the highly unfavorable reduction that the concept of rhetoric has undergone since classical times or even since the seventeenth century. If we follow simply our own reflexes or impulses, I think we are likely to say that rhetoric is flowery or emotional or manipulatory language. In other words, we reduce rhetoric to one of its aspects, diction, and then we concentrate on a corruption of that aspect. Not content with taking part of the whole, we take a bad part for the whole.[20]

A powerful example of this modern contempt for rhetoric is given by John Locke, who affirms:

> ...all the Art of Rhetoric, besides order and clearness, all the artificial and figurative application of words [that] eloquence hath invented, are for nothing else but to insinuate wrong ideas, move the passions, and thereby mislead judgment; and so indeed are perfect cheats: And therefore however laudable or allowable oratory may render them in harangues and popular addresses, they are certainly, in all discourses that pretend to inform or instruct, wholly to be avoided; and where true knowledge is concerned, cannot but be thought a great fault, either of the language or person that makes use of them.[21]

As this paragraph attests, Locke's opinion is much more severe than Descartes' and Kant's. He places rhetoric in general (without making distinctions between 'bad' and 'good' kinds of rhetoric) among the "abuses of words" that ought to be avoided at any price. His opinion is at first sight similar to Kant's general observation in the *Critique of Judgment*, although Kant shares the admiration of Descartes for artless eloquence.

What lies behind the modern adoption of the Stoic ideal of rhetoric and the contempt for Ciceronian oratory? At first glance, the reasons seem to be *purely ethical.* Cicero's oratory is manipulative and deceptive, whereas Stoic rhetoric is transparent and trustworthy. Cicero's

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[20] H. M. Davidson, "The Decline of Rhetoric in Seventeenth Century France," p. 61.

[21] John Locke, *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1975), 508.

oratory stirs the emotions, while Stoic rhetoric appeals to the sound understanding of the audience. Cicero's oratory is crafty and affected, while Stoic eloquence is… a virtue.

However, from a philosophical point of view, the opposition between the two kinds of rhetoric involves more than sincerity and moral righteousness. Cicero is not simply an unscrupulous orator whose ideal incarnates the sort of sophistical malevolence that both ancient and modern philosophers despise. The fact that Cicero's ideal orator has characteristics other than natural eloquence and moral sentiment has important philosophical grounds, which I will attempt to describe in the following section.

2. **Epistemological Presuppositions of Ciceronian Rhetoric**

As mentioned previously, Cicero's ideal orator, although not that different from the moral and intellectual characterization of the *vir bonus dicendi peritus*, is more mundane. This ideal orator must be able to *move the passions*, in order to persuade the audience of two types of arguments:

(a) Arguments that although true are not persuasive enough when plainly presented.

(b) Arguments that cannot be ascertained as true but are sufficiently probable or plausible and prove useful in the advancement of society's common good.

An example may help to understand this point. In the case of Cicero's renowned speeches against Catiline, we find the ideal orator trying to persuade his audience with the second kind of arguments—i.e., merely probable ones. The information about Catiline's conspiracy that was available to the consul Cicero indicated a high probability of a revolt but was not absolutely conclusive. Cicero did not know with certainty that Catiline would attack Rome, but all clues pointed in that direction. Not to risk the safety of the citizens and his status as Consul, he

persuaded the Senate of the need to exile Catiline. The rhetoric of the *Catiline Orations*, therefore, is not based on "clear and distinct truths," but rather on "confused probabilities," as Descartes would have them. As a consequence, this rhetoric must artfully arouse the emotions of the audience in order to persuade it to act.

As this episode is the most legendary of Cicero's life, we can understand why Kant considered that Cicero "did not himself always remain true to this ideal [of the *vir bonus dicendi peritus]*." Such a *vir bonus* would have never denounced Catiline's conspiracy based solely upon warnings and rumors. He would have waited for "evidence" of Catiline's intentions before acting—e.g., a faithful testimony, Catiline's own confession, or perhaps the very event of an assault on Rome. But Cicero considered (maybe too hastily) that Rome's safety could not afford to wait for certainty. Cicero the Academic would not act as a Stoic in political matters. The Academic philosopher accepts probabilities as grounds for action, while the Stoic only acts on the basis of what is certain or evident. Not surprisingly, Cicero's participation in the Catiline affair as well as in many other political controversies throughout his life make him, in the eyes of Kant and others, a rather unprincipled Stoic.[22]

2.1. Cicero's interpretation of Plato's Socrates

In order to better describe Cicero's Academic position concerning rhetoric, let us briefly remember the origins of the ancient controversy on the art of speech. In his famous dialogue about rhetoric –*Gorgias*– Plato criticizes rhetoric for its usefulness to persuade about matters whose truth has not been settled. The sophist Gorgias—Socrates' interlocutor—defines rhetoric as "a producer of persuasion." To this claim, Socrates retorts by asking what kind of

[22] Kant considers that Cicero is a Stoic in moral matters: "Cicero was a disciple of Plato in speculative philosophy, a Stoic in morals" (*Jäsche Logic*, 31).

"persuasion" is the business of rhetoric.[23] As always, Socrates frames his question as a logical dichotomy: is rhetorical persuasion derived from *knowledge* or merely from *belief*? For knowledge—says Socrates—can never be false, but belief can either be true or false. Gorgias shamefully falls into the dialectical trap and answers that the type of persuasion that rhetoric produces has to do, not with knowledge, but only with belief.

Many interpretations have been given to this passage. Terence Irwin and Bryan Vickers' view is that Gorgias' defeat in the dialogue is due to Plato's biased depiction of rhetoricians as bad dialecticians—i.e., as weak adversaries for Socrates.[24] According to Irwin and Vickers, Gorgias would have done much better in his conversation with Socrates, had it not been narrated by the philosophically biased Plato. In my view, although the dramatic character of Gorgias does surrender rather soon in the dialogue, his argument is crucial for the defense of the art of speech: rhetoric (particularly in its deliberative and forensic kinds) deals for the most part with non-settled judgments—judgments whose veracity is yet unknown or even simply unattainable.

To be sure, this does not mean that rhetoric cannot deal also with true belief, namely, knowledge. Only the dichotomy set by Socrates makes us suppose so. Rhetoric can also be about plain, unadorned truth, as Quintilian and Descartes wanted. Nonetheless, Gorgias' point is fundamental—i.e., when truth is not available, we need to resort to persuasion based on probabilities in order to further action.

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[23] Plato, *Gorgias*, 453a-454a.

[24] "Is Plato trying to portray three historical characters with their actual inconsistencies, or trying to develop the strongest anti-Socratic case for Socrates to refute? … It is more useful for assessing the philosophical merits of the dialogue if we suppose that Plato intends the latter. But in that case, we need to ask whether he has done the best he could for each opponent." Terence Irwin ed., "Introduction" to *Gorgias* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1979), 9. See also Brian Vickers, *In Defense of Rhetoric* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1988).

As an Academic philosopher, that is, as a philosopher who reads Plato's dialogues through the lens of skepticism, Cicero has an interesting reading of this dialogue. He expresses sincere respect for Gorgias, but at the same time he seems to consider that Socrates might have been a better orator:

> ...the famous Gorgias of Leontini, who, according to Plato appeared as an advocate of the orator when he lost his case against the philosopher, [was] an adversary who either in reality never was defeated by Socrates and Plato's famous dialogue is untrue, or if he was defeated, obviously Socrates was more eloquent and fluent and... a fuller and better orator... (*DO* III, 129).

But Cicero's admiration for Socrates does not go so far as to endorse his dichotomy concerning rhetoric as either based on *knowledge* or based on *false belief*. His Academic skeptical stance, in fact, lets him take seriously Gorgias' view that rhetoric is necessary to settle otherwise undecidable claims. But at the same time, Cicero considers that rhetoric can be also useful to advance plain truths. In his classification of the duties of rhetoric with its corresponding styles, Cicero makes a compromise between the views of Gorgias and Socrates. The plain style, namely, the style that merely instructs, is adequate to present issues that are by nature not arguable or evident. But the other two styles—i.e., the agreeable or beautiful style, which aims at pleasing, and the forceful or grand style, which aims at moving the emotions—are suitable to the exposition of merely probable arguments. In Cicero's view, mastering these two latter styles (especially the grand style) is what makes an orator "perfect." Simple instruction (the plain presentation of evident truths), although being important, does not demand much talent or art—it only requires a good command of language and an unambiguous delivery.

2.2. *Stoic and Modern Rhetoric*

The Stoics, conversely, took to heart the Socratic position that rhetoric ought to become dialectical argumentation on the basis of absolutely true judgments. Their discussion of invention and style, therefore, is almost inexistent. As Catherine Atherton asserts, "Stoic stylistics... is a version of the Doctrine of the virtues or excellences... correctness, clarity, conciseness, appropriateness..."[25] Rhetoric, in Stoic terms, is just *good dialectic*—i.e., logically correct, truthful and clearly expressed argument.

Cicero's opinion on Stoic rhetoric is wittily stated in many passages of his works. In the third book of *De Oratore*, for example, he refers to Stoic rhetoric in the context of a discussion about the philosophical schools that are more akin to the art of speech. He argues:

> The Stoics, of whom I by no means disapprove, I nevertheless dismiss—and I do not fear their anger, because anger is quite unknown to them, and I am grateful to them for being the only one of all the schools who has pronounced eloquence to be a virtue and a form of wisdom. But clearly there is something in them that is quite out of keeping with the orator whom we are depicting... (*DO* III, 65).

The criticism is more fully developed in *Topica*. There, Cicero affirms that not only the Stoics lack a doctrine of polished style, for they disregard the ornate and grand styles, but they also have neglected the art of topics:

> The Stoics... have followed diligently the ways of judgment by means of the science which they call dialectic, but they have totally neglected the art which is called topics, an art which is both more useful and certainly prior in the order of nature (*T* II, 6-7).

It is precisely this art of topics or invention that supplies the orator with probable arguments. The Stoics considered that, since the subject of the speech ought to be evident—i.e.,

[25] C. Atherton, "Hand over Fist: The Failure of Stoic Rhetoric," 392-427.

a grasped, indubitable truth—invention was unnecessary. Cicero, however, considers that training in dialectic is not enough for the development of the ideal orator. For him, a rhetoric that neglects invention and derides style is pointless. This opinion can be best appreciated in Cicero's wittiest criticism of Stoic rhetoric in *De Finibus*. There, he says:

> This whole area [rhetoric] was completely neglected by Zeno and his followers, whether through lack of ability or lack of inclination. Cleanthes wrote an art of rhetoric and so did Chrysippus; these works are a perfect reading for those whose burning ambition is to keep quiet (*DF* IV, 7).

Now, we have seen that Cartesian thought has somehow adopted the Stoic ideal of rhetoric. Behind this adoption and its concomitant distrust for oratory lies the philosophical interest to provide a solid foundation for the sciences. Through different means, early modern philosophers such as Descartes, Bacon and Locke (the traditional foes of rhetoric) considered that certainty ought to be attainable both in theoretical and in moral matters.[26] Since oratory as understood by Cicero stands (not solely but primarily) in the realm of what is uncertain, modern philosophy cannot but see it as an evil. As Hugh Davidson affirms:

> His [Descartes'] object of study is the nature of things, things behaving according to their intrinsic and constitutive principles. In the rhetoric inspired by Cicero and Quintilian… things are as they are believed to be and as they are stated to be, on grounds of what is probable or effective or both; they really have no status outside of language, opinion and action. In the science projected by Descartes, however, things are what analysis and demonstration show them to be.[27]

In sum, the aspiration to foundational knowledge led early modern thinkers to deprive probability of any epistemological value, and, in turn, to deride the art of rhetoric. The latter

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[26] Of course, the latter did not prove so easy. As T. Carr mentions: "Descartes allows for the probable and for *vraisemblance*, as seen in the rules of his provisional code of morality, in the Third Part of the *Discourse*." T. Carr, *Descartes and the Resilience of Rhetoric*, 32.

[27] H. M. Davidson, "The Decline of Rhetoric in Seventeen Century France," p. 70.

became, as Davidson summarizes, an inferior art, which is unnecessary, confused, and excessively tied to the (also inferior) faculty of imagination:

> ... these moderns are in general agreement on a negative conclusion: none of them can accept the notion of rhetoric as the predominant art, though it is not unreasonable to grant it, along with poetry, a minor and essentially decorative role. They arrive at this verdict for various reasons: lack of genuine need for rhetoric, because natural gifts suffice for persuasive speech; lack of rationality, because the art relies too much on imagination and feeling instead of reason; lack of promise as regards progress, because literature and the fine arts have already advanced to a point near completeness and perfection; lack of the geometrical spirit, because rhetoric is not exact enough in its definitions, statements, and proofs.[28]

In his criticism of oratory, Kant seems to overlook these epistemological commitments. He naively sides with Descartes' neo-Stoic view on rhetoric, unaware of its adherence to a set of dogmatic epistemological presuppositions.[29] Even though Kant's enterprise aims at providing a solid foundation for the sciences, it cannot be considered a dogmatic endeavor. As we will see in the following chapters, Kant's critique of metaphysics makes use of skeptical procedures and contains a fallibilistic motive. But before we begin to explore this path, I would like to mention a few aspects of Kant's personal relation with the works of Cicero. The issue may be somewhat unrelated to the argument presented until now, but it is worth mentioning, since it helps to make plausible the view that Kant did not completely dismiss Cicero's work, but was rather a good reader, even if not always very appreciative, of the Roman orator.

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[28] H. M. Davidson, "The Decline of Rhetoric in Seventeen Century France," p. 73.

[29] An important caveat to the identification of Kant's attitude towards rhetoric with Descartes' is made by H. Parret, who says: "Evoquer dans un seul et même geste Descartes et Kant à propos de la rhétorique es sans doute un exercice dangereux puisque la condemnation se prononce chez Descartes au nom de la vérité tandis que chez Kant aun nom de la raison et du devoir." H. Parret, "La rhetorique: heuristique et methode chez Kant," 106.

3. **Kant's Intellectual Relation to Cicero's Works**

Kant's intellectual relation to the works of Cicero need not be completely obscured by his historical understanding of the political figure of Cicero, or by his sharing a common modern view of rhetoric, that emphasizes the Stoic instead of the Academic ideal. In fact, it has been argued that Kant read Cicero widely and with keen interest. In his biographical account, Manfred Kühn tells us that Kant was very fond of classical Latin authors during his school years, Cicero among them:

> The backbone of the education at the Collegium Fidericianum was Latin. Not only did students spend the most time learning Latin, it was also by far the most important discipline. ... Emanuel did well in Latin, and those who knew him then thought that he would make classics his chosen field of studies. Ruhnken said that between Easter 1739 and September 1740, he himself was most interested in philosophy, while Emanuel was most interested in the classics. ... Kant continued to think highly of the ancients, reading them throughout his life.[30]

In spite of this, Kant's appraisal of Cicero's works is rather ambiguous. First of all, Kant does not waste any opportunity to deride Cicero's pompous style, although he immediately acknowledges its persuasive power:

> Cicero shows an affected taste and art of speaking. One forgets this if the exposition has energy, then, we are charmed and transported by the exposition. (*Hechsel Logic,* 115).

Then again, he judges Cicero negatively in philosophical matters, as a mere historian of philosophy:

> Learning that is historical in form but rational in matter is called a historical cognition. There are many Ciceros in philosophy, many, indeed, who do not know at all what sort of difference there is between philosophy and the science of philosophizing (*Blomberg Logic*, 52).

[30] M. Kühn, *Kant: a Biography*, 48-49.

However, hand in hand with his scorn for Cicero's historically minded philosophy, Kant acknowledges his ability to make philosophy popular, and he considers that his example in this respect ought to be followed:

> To learn true popularity, however, one must read the ancients, e.g., *Cicero's philosophical writings,* the poets, Horace, Virgil, etc., and among the moderns Hume, Shaftesbury, et. al. Men who have all had a good deal of intercourse with the refined world, without which one cannot be popular. ... This truly popular perfection of cognition is in fact a great and rare perfection, which shows much insight into the science (*Jäsche Logic*, 47, my emphasis).

Perhaps the area in which Kant expresses the most his debt to Cicero is ethics. In the *Metaphysics of Morals*, for instance, Kant describes the doctrine of rights in relation to a doctrine of duties of the sort Cicero had given:

> But why is the doctrine of morals usually called (especially by Cicero) a doctrine of duties and not also a doctrine of rights, even though rights have reference to duties? The reason is that we know our own freedom …only through the moral imperative, which is a proposition commanding duty, from which the capacity for putting others under obligation, that is, the concept of right, can afterwards be explicated (*MM,* 6: 239).

Even though Kant expresses more admiration for Seneca than for Cicero in moral matters, he still considers the latter as an important exponent of Stoic moral doctrine. In this passage, for example, Cicero is considered as the main authority in what Kant calls a "doctrine of duties." In the following section, I will outline the most recent scholarly discussion about Cicero's influence on Kant's ethics.

3.1. *Garve's translation of De Officiis and its impact on Kant's Groundwork*

Cicero's possible influence on Kantian ethics has been a matter of some debate in twentieth-century Kantian scholarship. The issue was first presented in 1939 by Klaus Reich.[31] Subsequent articles ensued in the second half of the century,[32] introducing some modifications to the argument but following its basic premise: that Kant's writing of the *Groundwork of a Metaphysics of Morals* could have been influenced by his reading of Christian Garve's translation and commentaries of Cicero's *De Officiis*.

The fact that Kant read this translation and that his desire to contest Garve's (and Cicero's) theory of morality decidedly influenced his writing of the *Groundwork* is historically documented in Hamman's correspondence.[33] What remains unclear is the extent of *De Officiis'* influence on Kant's finished work. It could be that Kant was more influenced by Garve than by Cicero, or that he was influenced by Garve's Cicero, or that he was only casually interested in this newly translated classical material and it did not shape any of his ideas in the *Groundwork*. Commentators' opinions range widely in this respect. Some of them see the similarities between subject matter, terminology, and structure of Cicero's *De Officiis* and Kant's *Groundwork* as a strong indication of the influence; others find the historical link less clear, although interpretatively fruitful. The former is the case, for example, of Reich, who affirms:

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[31] See Klaus Reich, "Kant and Greek Ethics II" *Mind* 48. 192 (1939): 446-463.

[32] Mainly: Gregory Des Jardins, "Terms of *De Officiis* in Hume and Kant" *Journal of the History of Ideas* 28. 2 (1967): 237-242; John Van Der Zande, "In the image of Cicero: German Philosophy between Wolff and Kant" *Journal of the History of Ideas* 56. 3 (1995): 419-442; Reinhold F. Glei, "Lux Regiomontana: Der kategorische Imperativ in Ciceros De Officiis" *Boschumer Philosophisches Jahrbuch für Antike und Mittelalter* 4 (1999): 49-61; Manfred Kühn, "Kant and Cicero" *Kant und die Berliner Aufklärung. Akten des IX. Internationalen Kant-Kongresses* 3 (2001): 270-278; and Carlos Melches Gibert, *Der Einfluss von Christian Garves Übersetzung Ciceros "De Officiis" auf Kants "Grundlegung zur Metaphysik der Sitten* (Regensburg: S. Roderer, 1994).

[33] In a letter to Herder (February 8th, 1784), Hamman reports Kant's intention to write an answer to Cicero's system of morality as accounted by Garve. See K. Reich, "Kant and Greek Ethics," 447.

> The clue to the discovery that the formula "act as if the maxim of your action were to become through your will a universal law of nature,".... was furnished to Kant by the statement in *De Officiis* of the rule *naturae convenienter vivere*, the formula which was discovered by the ancient Stoics and, thanks to Panaetius and Cicero, had remained popular until Kant's own time. [34]

The latter case, on the other hand, is well represented by R. Glei, who, although granting an enormous similarity between Kant's categorical imperative and Cicero's formula of *living in accordance with nature*, is not willing to make a definitive historical statement, but rather considers that this question is secondary and can be overlooked. What is important here, according to Glei, is the interpretative advantage that results from reading Cicero in the light of Kant:

> Cicero's 'formula' and Kant's imperative are in fact different in their formulation, but identical in their subject matter. Therefore, in the first place, the question of whether Kant on his part was influenced by Cicero may be consciously avoided—even though this (influence) is very probable. ... Kant's imperative was for us only a heuristic tool in order to better understand Cicero's formula—no more, no less than that. [35]

In the middle position stands De Jardins, who acknowledges the influence of Garve's Cicero on Kant and suggests that the works of Cicero may have been as significant for Kant as they had been for Hume.[36] Both authors had a deep knowledge of Latin classical literature and enjoyed reading it throughout their lives. De Jardins, however, is more modest in his claim and wants to circumscribe Cicero's influence to the terminology used by Kant in the *Groundwork*:

> The suggestion is, at least, that Cicero provided the context in which Kant expressed his moral philosophy and that Kant, much like Hume, may have been understood by his contemporaries for having announced his philosophy in the vocabulary of *De Officiis*.[37]

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[34] K. Reich, "Kant and Greek Ethics," 457.

[35] R. F. Glei, "Lux Regiomontana," 52-60 *(*my translation).

[36] "Today the fame of Cicero has decayed and the fashion is rather to associate Hume with Kant... But Kant who has never been regarded as an easy or eloquent philosopher, was nonetheless indebted to Cicero, particularly in ethics." G. Des Jardins, "Terms of *De Officiis* in Hume and Kant," 238.

[37] G, Des Jardins*, "*Terms of *De Officiis* in Hume and Kant*,*" 242.

On a quite different (and more controversial) level stands Manfred Kühn's interpretation. With his vast understanding of Kant's life, he assures us that "Kant knew Cicero well," both from his Latin training at school, as well as from the above cited translation of *De Officiis* by Garve. According to him, there is no question that Cicero indeed strongly influenced Kant. However, Kühn disagrees with the other commentators as to the importance of such influence in the *Groundwork*:

> One has to be suspicious when it is suggested that "Cicero provided the essential context in which Kant expressed his moral philosophy." But we must be even more suspicious when it is claimed that Cicero's *On Duties* played an important role in Kant's formulation of the three versions of the categorical imperative. ... Such suspicions do not mean, of course, that Cicero and Garve where completely unimportant to Kant when he was writing his *prodrome* of the metaphysics of morals, even if this seems to be what the majority of Kant scholars believe. ... Still these influences are not what is most decisive either. What is more important is that the *Foundations* provide a clear formulation of *a decisive alternative* to Cicero's view. ... The *Foundations* deliver not just Kant's answer to Garve's Cicero but his answer to any kind of Ciceronian ethics.[38]

For Kühn, even though the historical link between Cicero and Kant is clear, the influence has been overestimated. He considers that the differences between the highly eudaimonistic and communitarian ethical theory of Cicero and Kant's universalistic and deontologist morality are much wider than their similarities. Hence, if Cicero had any influence at all on Kant's ethics, it is precisely as the sort of theoretical model that should not be followed.[39]

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[38] M. Kühn, "Kant and Cicero," 272 (my emphasis).

[39] "A Ciceronian ethics that remains founded on common life, expressed by such concepts as honor *(honestas),* faithfulness *(fides),* fellowship *(societas),* and seemliness *(decorum)* was too superficial and unphilosophical for Kant. For this reason Kant rejected Cicero and all those trying to develop a Ciceronian ethics." M. Kühn, "Kant and Cicero," 276.

Kühn's analysis is in my view wrong, especially concerning his interpretation of Cicero's ethics.[40] But most importantly, I believe that in his rejection of a common link between both theories, Kühn has been guided by Kant's negative opinion about Cicero that was explained above. Kühn rightly brings into account the fact that "Kant saw Cicero more a follower than an original philosopher"[41] and he quotes the paragraph in the *Logic* where Kant himself states: "When philosophy subsequently passed from the Greeks to the Romans, it was not extended; for the Romans always remained just *disciples*" (*Jäsche Logic*, 31). But an interpretation based on this partial view of Kant's relation to Cicero, as I have argued, need not be completely endorsed.

In brief, I do not want to underestimate Kant's criticism of rhetoric or of Ciceronian philosophy, but I consider it important to give it its due and no more than that. Moreover, I want to suggest that if Kant's ethical foundations were widely influenced by Cicero's Stoic views in *De Officiis*,[42] there is no reason not to consider that Kant's epistemological stance was also somehow influenced by Cicero's *Academica*. Kant's use of skeptical or fallibilist strategies in the "Dialectic of Pure Reason" will hopefully show, with sufficiently persuasive force, that Cicero's account lies behind Kant's critique of metaphysics.

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[40] Kühn forgets the link between *De Officiis* and *De Republica* that Glei very well indicates in "Lux Regiomontana," and that explains why Cicero's ethics is universalistic and not based on merely communitarian constraints. In my view, the most forceful argument on the influence of Cicero on Kant's *Groundwork* is given in Glei's article.

[41] M. Kühn, "Kant and Cicero," 271.

[42] And also, in my view, by Cicero's discussion about happiness in *De Finibus*. See note 3, p. 11.

Chapter II

Cicero's Rhetorical Fallibilism:

A Theory of Probability and Prudential Wisdom

> And nevertheless I myself am not the sort of person
> never to give approval to anything false,
> never to give absolute assent, never to hold an opinion;
> it is the wise man we are investigating.
> Cicero, *Academica*

Even though Hellenistic skepticism—in which the fallibilism of Carneades and his successors is usually included—is today a very fruitful field of scholarly research, the relationship between the art of rhetoric and this form of philosophical thought has not yet been explored to the extent it should be.[1] The fact that rhetoric and Socratic skepticism converged in the Platonic Academy of Carneades and Philo of Larissa is undeniable.[2] Carneades is well known for his sophistical dexterity, exemplified in the episode of the embassy to Rome (155 B.C.), in which he gave successive speeches in favor of and against justice. Cicero also tells us that Charmadas—Carneades' pupil and Philo's master—was as eloquent as Carneades, and that Philo combined

[1] As exceptions, it is worth mentioning A. Michel, *Les rapports de la rhétorique et de la philosophie dans l'ouvre de Cicéron* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1960); Charles Brittain, *Philo of Larissa* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001) and Harald Thorsrud, *Cicero's Ethics* (unpublished ms.).

[2] To avoid misunderstandings, I will adopt Sextus Empiricus' classification of the Academy into First Academy (before Arcesilaus), Middle Academy (led by Arcesilaus) and New Academy (led by Carneades). I will include Philo under this last heading.

his philosophical lectures with rhetorical exercises.[3] However, the concrete influence of the art of rhetoric in the shaping of the Academy's epistemological stance remains problematic. In fact, it could be argued that rhetoric had nothing to do with the origins of Academic fallibilism. That the Academic skeptics, from Carneades on, were also rhetoricians could be historically justified in view of the central place that was given to rhetoric in Roman liberal education (in spite of the bad reputation it had in some academic circles in the second century B.C.). After all, most educated citizens of Rome were trained to some extent in the art of rhetoric. Nonetheless, in my view, the coincidence between the rhetorical expertise of the heads of the Academy and their development of a mitigated, probabilistic form of skepticism should not be overlooked by the philosopher or the historian of ideas. There may be common epistemological roots in both disciplines that are worth bringing into light.

In this chapter I propose a reading of Cicero's *Academica* that stresses those aspects agreeing with the rhetorical tradition of Isocrates and Aristotle—a tradition for which rhetoric dealt especially with the invention of probable theses or arguments. I aim at indicating how the incorporation of this rhetorical outlook into the corpus of a skeptical theory provides the ground for a new fallibilistic epistemology, consisting in a set of criteria on the grounds of which it is legitimate to hold a belief or opinion.

Some preliminary remarks may be useful before examining the text. To interpret *Academica* is a challenging enterprise for many reasons. Cicero's own epistemological position in the treatise is not easy to elucidate, especially considering the book's dialogical structure, its incomplete existing form,[4] and the rather great extent to which Cicero relies on discussions that were well

[3] *De Oratore* I, 84 (Charmadas) and III, 110 (Philo). For an account of the types of rhetoric that most probably were performed and taught by Charmadas and Philo see Ch. Brittain, *Philo of Larissa*, 296-342.

[4] The two existing books of *Academica* are the first book of the second edition and the second book of the first edition (the *Lucullus*). Throughout this chapter I will refer to them as *Academica* I and II (*A* I and *A* II).

known to his academic *milieu*, but that have also come to our time in an incomplete manner. In this respect, the interpreter of Cicero faces enormous difficulties.

First, in *Academica*, Cicero attributes to Carneades the fallibilistic theory that he himself presents as a character of the second dialogue. But since the existing sources of Carneades' thought are fragmentary, we cannot be completely certain that all aspects of the theory presented by Cicero may be rightly ascribed to him.[5] We can, of course, trust Cicero in this matter, and indeed, it has been already established by comparing Cicero's account of Carneades with those of Plutarch, Diogenes Laertius and others that at least the general aspects of the doctrine in *Academica* are Carneadean. But just as Sextus Empiricus' systematic version of Pyrrhonian skepticism may be colored here and there by his own interpretation, Cicero's account of Carneadean fallibilism may also be, in some respects, due to his own fashioning.

Yet another interpretative problem is whether the fallibilistic theory described in *Academica* was positively endorsed by Carneades and his successors or was just a dialectical construct used to attack Stoic dogmatism.[6] Since, in any case, it is clear from the text that Cicero considers the

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[5] Especially important sources are: Diogenes Laertius, *Lives of Eminent Philosophers* (Cambridge-London: Harvard University Press, 1980); Plutarch, *The Lives of Noble Grecians and Romans* (Chicago: Encyclopedia Britannica, 1990); Sextus Empiricus, *Outlines of Pyrrhonism* (New York, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996) and *Against the Logicians* (Cambridge-London: Harvard University Press, 1983); and Eusebe de Cesaree, *La préparation évangélique* (Paris: Le Cerf, 1987). All fragments concerning Carneades' thought have been compiled by B. Wisniewski, *Karneades Fragmente, Text und Kommentar* (Wroclaw, 1970) and by H. J. Mette, "*Weitere Akademiker heute von Lakydos bis zu Kleitomachos*" *Lustrum* 27 (1985): 39-148.

[6] Cicero expresses doubts as to whether Carneades upholds the fallibilistic theory or only uses it as a dialectical weapon against Stoic dogmatism. According to Cicero (*A* II, 78), Clitomachus presented Carneades as advancing the fallibilistic theory only dialectically, whereas Metrodorus and Philo endorsed the contrary view, namely, that Carneades indeed believed in the doctrine of the probable or *pithanon*. Many different interpretations have been given to this problem. I agree with Thorsrud's claim that "if the dialectical interpretation…is correct, then Cicero seriously misunderstands, or at least misrepresents, his Academic predecesors" (p. 4). H. Thorsrud, "Cicero on his Academic Predecessors: the Fallibilism of Arcesilaus and Carneades" *Journal of the History of Philosophy*, 40.1 (2002): 1-18; P. See also Couissin, "The Stoicism of the New Academy" in *The Skeptical Tradition*, M. Burnyeat ed. (Berkeley:

theory to be cogent and useful enough so as to be honestly held, I have decided to set the thesis of an "esoteric Academic doctrine" aside. For the general purposes of this chapter, I will assume that the fallibilistic theory was in fact fashioned by Carneades (whether for dialectical reasons or as a doctrine of his own), and that it is (as Cicero clearly sees it) the New Academy's most important development.[7]

My reasons for taking this stance are simple: first, the aim of this chapter is to provide an elaboration of the epistemological theory *as it appears in Academica*. The problem of its sources would certainly be useful in drawing a line between Cicero's arguments and those of his Academic mentors, but it would not add much to the cogency of the doctrine as Cicero presents it in the text. Second, Kant's reading of Cicero most probably gave little significance to this issue, which only became prominent in the course of the nineteenth-century German philological investigations (the so-called *Quellenforschung*). To the eyes of eighteen-century philosophy, the doctrines in *Academica* and other writings of Cicero clearly were Cicero's elaboration of the less definite Academic view. This being the case, the problem of sources becomes irrelevant for the general aim of this investigation.

1. **Isocrates' Fallibilistic Anthropology and Aristotle's Rhetoric of Probability**

Rhetoric, the art of persuading by means of speech, is perhaps the most discussed human activity in the history of Western thought. During at least three centuries, the ancient Greeks

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University of California Press, 1983), 31-63; V. Brochard, *Les Sceptiques Grecs* (Paris: Vrin, 1959); C. Levy, *Cicero Academicus* (École Français de Rome, 1992); J. Glucker, *Antiochus and the Late Academy* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1978); R. Hirzel, *Untersuchungen zu Ciceros philosophischen Schriften* (Hildesheim: G. Olms, 1964); R. Bett, "Carneades *pithanon*, a Reappraisal of its Role and Status" *Oxford Studies in Ancient Philosophy* 7 (1989): 59-94.

[7] From Brittain we learn that Philo may have changed his stance on the issue by the time he wrote the "Roman Books." However, he also held this view in what Brittain calls his Philonian-Metrodorian period. See: Ch. Brittain, *Philo of Larissa*, 17.

engaged in arguments about whether rhetoric was an art or only a practice, whether it involved knowledge claims or only false beliefs, whether it was or not a deceitful craft, and whether it was immoral or not to engage in it—in a word, whether rhetoric was a legitimate political activity or not.

The impression we get from the general history of philosophy is that the discussion began with Socrates, who opposed rhetoric to philosophy or dialectic. The view that arises from Plato's Socratic dialogues, in fact, is that rhetoric and philosophy are two very dissimilar activities. Philosophy deals with truth, while rhetoric deals with false opinion. Philosophy is a "science," while rhetoric is not even an "art." Philosophy is morally upright, while rhetoric is morally wretched.

The discussion, however, has not always been framed in this dichotomous way. A contemporary of Plato and also a pupil of Socrates, the rhetorician Isocrates presented a different view on the debate during the fourth century B.C. In both his pamphlet *Against the Sophists* and his fictional discourse *Antidosis*, Isocrates claims that the art of speech he teaches and to which he refers indiscriminately as either rhetoric or philosophy is different in kind from the art of speech taught by most of the rhetoricians of his time—the so-called sophists.[8] The sophists, he argues, either teach a highly technical rhetoric—one that is so constrained by grammatical rules that it does not allow the free invention of arguments—or a general moral theory disguised under the appearance of rules for political deliberation, which fails to endow the student with the ability to think through concrete moral problems. Rhetoric (or philosophy),

[8] It is difficult to determine from whom exactly Isocrates wants to set himself apart. In "Isocrates' Fellow Rhetoricians," Stanley Wilcox names Alcidamas, Thrasymachus and Lysias. It is clear that Isocrates does not refer to Protagoras and Gorgias, who were both his teachers and greatly influenced him. See Stanley Wilcox, "Isocrates' Fellow Rhetoricians" *The American Journal of Philology*, 66. 2 (1945): 171-186.

in the way Isocrates understands and teaches it, involves what these two spurious arts lack: freedom of thought and training in real-life moral deliberation.

Of the two criticisms that Isocrates presents, the second is the most important for our purposes. Once and again, Isocrates tells us that the sophists lie when they proclaim to teach moral virtue:

> .... these professors have gone so far in their lack of scruple that they attempt to persuade our young men that if they will only study under them, they will *know what to do in life* and through this *knowledge will become happy and prosperous.*[9]

Rather than a simple moral criticism of the sophists' opportunistic disposition and arrogant pretensions, what is at stake here is an epistemological consideration. We should notice in this paragraph Isocrates' use of the term "knowledge" in relation to happiness. Happiness and prosperity, for any consistent Greek, arise from the exercise of virtue. If only one would *know* how to act virtuously, one would become happy. But Isocrates does not believe that one can actually possess this sort of knowledge. In other words, he does not believe that prudence may be taught and learned as any other kind of *theoretical knowledge* might be. Most probably, the sophists taught a general moral doctrine, a set of abstract principles (perhaps the definition of prudence, temperance, and the other virtues) that were supposed to be applied to specific cases. But learning the theory (as was to be expected) did not improve the students' moral character and proved useless later, in assemblies and courtrooms, where real deliberation was needed.

According to Isocrates, the sophists lied when they claimed to teach virtue because moral virtue (and they did know this!) is actually *not teachable*. This Isocratean view is supported by what we could call a "fallibilistic anthropology," or a conception of human nature that recognizes and embraces the constitutive frailty of human reason. Although human nature has been uniquely

[9] Isocrates, *Against the Sophists* (Cambridge-London: Harvard University Press, 1929), 2-3 (my emphasis).

endowed with the ability to reason, Isocrates argues, it lacks the capacity to have *moral certainty*—that is, to know exactly how it would be fit to act in particular circumstances. Isocrates equates this ability with the power to foresee or predict the future:

> Foreknowledge of future events is not vouchsafed to our human nature, but we are so far removed from this prescience that Homer, who has been conceded the highest reputation for wisdom, has pictured even the gods as at times debating among themselves about the future—not that he knew their minds but that he desired to show us that for mankind this power lies at the realm of the impossible. [10]

No knowledge concerning the best way to act will ever be attained by human beings, since possessing it would necessarily involve foreseeing the outcome of our actions. If, for example, before making an important monetary investment in the stock-market we could foresee the unfolding events, we would know exactly where, when and what amount of money to invest. But since we do not have this capacity, all we can do is imagine possible courses of action, deliberate on which is the best course in view of our goals and the observable circumstances, and act accordingly. The same seems to be the case for moral action. Knowing exactly what to do in a particular moral scenario would require being able to foresee the particular consequences of our choices. If we had this capacity, most of our moral dilemmas—e.g., whether to administer euthanasia or a new experimental treatment to a terminally ill relative—would vanish. But since we do not have it, we can only rely on our inexact capacity to morally deliberate.

[10] Isocrates, *Against the Sophists*, 2.

For Isocrates, thus, genuine rhetoric or philosophy is the art of deliberating, i.e., the art of discursively conjecturing about the fittest or most advantageous[11] way of acting, according to each case:

> For since it is not in the nature of man to attain a science by the possession of which we can know positively what we should do or what we should say, in the next resort I hold that man to be wise who is able by his powers of conjecture to arrive generally at the best course, and I hold that man to be a philosopher who occupies himself with the studies from which he will most quickly gain that kind of insight.[12]

In *Antidosis*, Isocrates offers a metaphor to explain the nature and scope of this art of speech. Just as we have bodies that we train by means of gymnastics, we have souls that we train by means of rhetoric or philosophy. In gymnastics we learn first the basic positions that are to be combined into different bodily disciplines or sports. In rhetoric we become familiar first with the basic forms of speech, which are combined later into general opinions or theories (*doxa*).[13] The success we may or not attain in practical life depends on our soul's ability to ponder these opinions in light of their proper cases of application.

But just as in gymnastics there is no assurance that we will not err while playing (e.g., strain our shoulder when throwing the javelin or miss our intended target), likewise, in rhetoric or philosophy there is no guarantee that we will evaluate probabilities in the right way and decide on the best course of action. This position entails that even the most virtuous human beings may sometimes err; otherwise they would not be humans but gods—and, for Isocrates, not even the gods of Homer, with their endless disputes, were able to avoid error (!). In fact, in the moral

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[11] There is no difference in Isocrates between the useful or advantageous, and the morally good. For Isocrates, what is not morally honorable cannot be advantageous in the long run. See his discussion of the advantageous in *Antidosis* (Cambridge-London: Harvard University Press, 1929), 281-285.

[12] Isocrates, *Antidosis*, 271.

[13] Isocrates, *Antidosis*, 184.

dilemma mentioned above, we could choose euthanasia and end the life of our relative, not knowing that the experimental treatment would work on her. Or we could choose the experimental treatment and simply prolong a life of suffering, if it did not work. Both outcomes may happen, and we can only choose what we consider to be the best probable outcome, after a judicious deliberation.

However, lack of certainty and the probability of undesired outcomes, according to Isocrates, do not undermine the utility and respectability of both gymnastics and rhetoric—through them our bodies and souls excel as much as nature allows. Isocrates considers that even though virtue is not teachable, one can develop a virtuous disposition by excelling in rhetoric. Why is this so? Because deliberation, for Isocrates, is just an internalized version of rhetorical practice. In deliberation we play the role of a rhetorician, who argues in favor and against probable courses of action in order *to convince ourselves* of the moral advisability of undertaking one particular course. Deliberation is rhetoric applied to oneself, for moral purposes. Thus, although Isocrates thinks that there is no art that can "implant" virtue where it does not exist, he does consider that an individual's virtuous tendencies can be developed through philosophical or rhetorical exertion:

> And let no one suppose that I claim that just living can be taught; for, in a word, I hold that there does not exist an art of the kind which can implant sobriety and justice in depraved natures. Nevertheless, I do think that the study of political discourse can help more than any other to stimulate and form such qualities of character.[14]

Recapitulating, Isocrates participates in the ancient Greek discussion on the validity of the art of rhetoric by setting his own activity apart from that of the other sophists. However, unlike Socrates, he does not alienate rhetoric from philosophy by assigning the former to the sophists and the latter to the dialecticians. Rather, he considers that rhetoric and philosophy are one and

[14] Isocrates, *Against the Sophists*, 21.

the same art of speech, which can be taught either in a genuine or in a spurious manner. The latter relies on a false epistemological presupposition—namely, that morality constitutes a system of *theoretical knowledge*. As such, morality could be taught and, once learned, human action would be conducted without error. Conversely, rhetoric or philosophy as understood by Isocrates is not a science (*epistêmê*) but an art (*technê*) that aims at training by means of speech the student's deliberative capacity so that he can make well-considered, even if not infallible, moral choices in private life and in assemblies and courtrooms. The most important premise of this conception of rhetoric is that, although absolute truth is not attainable in moral issues, it is still worthwhile to consider probable outcomes and to act in accordance with what seems to be the most appropriate way (or, to say it in rhetorical jargon, the "best case scenario").

According to this point of view, the dispute between sophists and non-sophists has more to do with the epistemological presuppositions of a unified art of speech than with the legitimacy of one discursive activity, i.e., philosophy, over another, i.e., rhetoric. Considered an exact science based on graspable truths, moral philosophy or rhetoric is illegitimate. However, considered as the *art of deliberation,* it is not only worth pursuing but it becomes the best possible human activity, for only by its means can virtue be developed. Genuine rhetoric or philosophy is, seem from this perspective, an imperfect but vital human practice.

This Isocratean tradition becomes more or less visible in the writings of Aristotle. The legend says that Aristotle and Isocrates were rivals: Aristotle seems to have decided to teach rhetoric in the Platonic Academy as a reaction to the excessively polished style of Isocrates' school.[15] But the similarities in their approach to rhetoric are more notorious than their

[15] Quintilian, *Institutio Oratoria*, III.1.14.

differences.[16] This is not to say, however, that Aristotle considered rhetoric and philosophy as the same discipline (following Isocrates). Rather, Aristotle respects the disciplinary boundaries traced by his mentor, Plato. But he also advocates for a much closer relationship between rhetoric and dialectic than Plato. In other words, Aristotle situates between Plato and Isocrates, in his attitude concerning rhetoric and philosophy.

Let us see how Aristotle's philosophy has inherited some of Isocrates' views. First, Isocrates' fallibilist anthropology finds an echo in some important aspects of Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics*. Aristotle holds here that one of the most important virtues is practical wisdom, or *phronêsis*. This "intellectual virtue" is the moral disposition, developed through habit, to deliberate well. It involves a particular sort of rational exercise or "practical knowledge." In Book VI, Aristotle distinguishes this practical knowledge from scientific or theoretical knowledge. He argues that the latter is of things that "can be demonstrated" while the former is about "variable things" (*NE*, 1140b35). In other words, scientific knowledge is exact—it involves certainty (or demonstration) because its object is invariable—while practical knowledge is inexact, since it deals with variable things (i.e., circumstances, events and human action), which do not allow for certainty:

> No one deliberates about eternal things, such as the universe, or the fact that a diagonal is incommensurable with the side… There is no deliberation about precise and self-sufficient sciences… Rather what we deliberate about are things that we bring about and not always in the same way— questions of medicine and of finance, for example, and of navigation more than of gymnastics, in that navigation has not been developed to such a level of exactness. Deliberation is concerned with *what usually happens in a certain way, where the consequences are unclear, and where things are not definite* (*NE*, 1112b, my emphasis).

[16] As William Benoit has suggests in "Isocrates and Aristotle on Rhetoric" *Rhetoric Society Quarterly* 20. 3 (1990): 251-259.

Deliberation or practical knowledge deals with probable outcomes, and the best choice concerning them. This idea of moral deliberation as an inexact rational exercise has a very Isocratean tone. To be sure, Isocrates would not consider that moral judgments involve knowledge at all, but only opinion (*doxa*); while Artistotle considers that there is some sort of knowledge involved in practical wisdom or *prhonêsis*. It is, however, not an exact knowledge—i.e., one involving certainty. Moreover, Aristotle seems to consider that erring in deliberation is not necessarily in contradiction with virtue. Given the variability of circumstances, a virtuous person who deliberates well may still err at choosing one alternative. In a passage where Aristotle refers to the difference between art (*technê*) and practical wisdom *(phronêsis)*, he argues:

> … while there is such a thing as excellence in art, there is no such a thing as excellence in practical wisdom; and in art he who errs willingly is preferable, but in practical wisdom, as in the virtues, he is the reverse… (*NE,* 1140b 20-25).

The idea in this paragraph seems to be that if, for example, a ship builder makes a mistake in a particular design, this proves that his knowledge about shipbuilding is flawed. Hence, it would be better for him to "err willingly"—e.g., when introducing an innovation to his design. But if a virtuous man errs, this does not put into question his practical wisdom. Circumstances may change or he may not know all the variables involved in his choice. Therefore, it is better for him to err unwillingly—i.e., it is a sign of his virtuous character that he did not intend to make a mistake.

Error in deliberation is a case commonly illustrated in Greek tragedy. As Aristotle argues in his *Poetics*, the best situation for a tragedy is one in which the hero, an average good man, commits an immoral deed in ignorance and, as a result, falls in disgrace.[17] Oedipus decides to

[17] "A better situation… is for the deed to be done in ignorance, and the relationship discovered afterwards, since there is nothing odious in it, and the discovery will serve to astound us" (*P*, 1454a).

murder his own father and marry his own mother not because he deliberated wrongly, but because in his deliberation he did not have all the required information. Moreover, Oedipus could not have known that events would develop in the way they did. Given their natural variability, Oedipus could always be mistaken in his calculus. Greek tragedy in general works on the grounds of this presupposition: that human deliberation is never infallible, and it is proper of human nature, as opposed to divine nature, to be always uncertain about the actual outcome of our moral choices.

Now, the second aspect in common between Isocrates and Aristotle's doctrines has to do with the relationship between rhetoric and deliberation. Although Aristotle never suggests, as Isocrates does, that deliberation be "internalized rhetoric," there are some important similarities between their accounts of deliberation and of rhetorical practice.

Aristotle begins his discussion of the art of rhetoric with the famous statement "rhetoric is the counterpart of dialectic" (R, 1354a1). The proofs of logic or dialectic, as stated in the *Analytic* books, are demonstrations—that is, syllogisms or inferences made on the basis of true premises. The "proofs" of rhetoric,[18] in contrast, are inferences that involve only *probable premises*. These inferences are called *enthymemes*, and they constitute, according to Aristotle, the "substance of rhetorical persuasion" (*R*, 1354a15). As a counterpart to dialectic, therefore, rhetoric supplies it with the rules for the invention of probable arguments.

Aristotle's definition of the probable (*eikos*) is:

> …a thing that happens for the most part, not however, as some definitions would suggest, anything whatever that so happens, but only if it belongs to the class of what can turn out otherwise… (*R,* 1357a35).

[18] Aristotle calls them "proofs" by analogy. Of course they are just valid inferences and not apodictic demonstrations, but Aristotle insists in the analogy: "… persuasion is a sort of demonstration (since we are most fully persuaded when we consider a thing to have been demonstrated)..." (*R,* 1355a 5).

It is probable that which usually happens in a certain way, but not by nature, since it could still happen differently. A probability is also described in the *Prior Analytics* as the content of a "reputable opinion":

> A probability is a reputable proposition: what men know to happen or not to happen, to be or not to be, for the most part thus and thus, is a probability, e.g., Envious men hate, those who are loved show affection" (*PrA*, 70a3-5).

As Q. Racionero argues, in the Aristotelian concept of probability, the stability or frequency of what happens is the result of both an empirical and intersubjective recognition. Something is probable when: *(a)* it happens for the most part, and *(b)* it is generally admitted to be so.[19] The second aspect is best conveyed by the definition of the probable as the content of a "reputable opinion" (*endoxos*). The confluence of these two meanings is important, because it points to the fact that Aristotle's concept of probability refers to everyday practical outcomes rather than to ontological claims.[20] Aristotle's theory of probability, as Isocrates', is especially tied to practical issues and is not a reflection on the nature of the universe's laws. As in the example use by Aristotle in the *Prior Analytics*, it is probable that an envious man would act out of hate. We can never have absolute certainty that this would be the case, but to know that envious people usually behave in this way helps in deliberating about moral issues.

It is worth noticing that Aristotle's above-cited description (p. 54) of the object of deliberation in the *Nicomachean Ethics* as "what usually happens in a certain way, where the consequences are unclear, and where things are not definite" (*NE*, 1112b) coincides with his definition of the probable (*eikos*) in the *Rhetoric*. Given the fact that rhetoric deals mainly with

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[19] "The concept of probability is complex in Aristotle. As it is described in the *Organon*, the probable (*eikos*) refers to what happens for the most part, but only insofar as it coincides with a generally admitted or plausible opinion (*endoxos*)" Quintin Racionero (transl.) in *Retórica*, Aristóteles (Madrid: Gredos, 1999), 185, note 58: (my translation).

[20] With respect to his ontological views, Aristotle is rather a metaphysical dogmatist.

inventing probable/reputable arguments, the link between rhetoric and moral deliberation becomes evident. Rhetoric, we could argue, deals with probable/reputable judgments about what is preferable to do in particular cases of moral deliberation.

However, it is interesting that Aristotle does not find, as Isocrates did, a direct relationship between rhetorical training and the development of a virtuous disposition. Nowhere in the *Rhetoric* or the *Nicomachean Ethics* does Aristotle assert the character-building properties of rhetorical training. In this respect, Aristotle seems to have a more "liberal" viewpoint than Isocrates. He seems to side with the sophist Gorgias in thinking that rhetoric is a neutral art that can be used for morally good or bad purposes.[21] It can be used, as Isocrates would, to teach moral deliberation, or it can be used in a manipulative way by persuading the audience through non-rational means—that is, by appealing to emotions (*pathos*) or to the authority of the orator (*ethos*). In fact, Aristotle is ambivalent in this respect—even though he considers *pathos* and *ethos* as legitimate rhetorical means of persuasion (*pisteis entechnai*), he also claims that rhetorical persuasion ought to limit itself to rational means (*logos*).[22] Perhaps Aristotle would have settled for an "ideal" Isocratean rhetoric, teaching how to morally deliberate, and a more "mundane" Gorgianic rhetoric, appealing to emotions in those scenarios where deliberation is too much to ask from an audience.

In sum, Aristotle continues the Isocratic tradition in some important aspects:

(a) The idea that moral deliberation involves fallible judgments (which for Aristotle constitute a sort of "knowledge," while for Isocrates are only "opinion") and error is always a possible outcome.

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[21] Plato, *Gorgias*, 456c-457c.

[22] For a discussion of this ambivalence in Aristotle, see J. Wisse, *Ethos and Pathos from Aristotle to Cicero* (Amsterdam: Adolf M. Hakkert, 1989).

(b) The claim that philosophy (as dialectic) and rhetoric are not necessarily alien, but that they complement each other.

(c) The acknowledgement that rhetoric is the realm *par excellence* of probabilistic thought.

From Isocrates and Aristotle, Cicero has retrieved the most important features of his understanding of the relationship between rhetoric and philosophy. As an Academic philosopher, it seems rather perplexing that Cicero would be more in tune with an Isocratean-Aristotelian view of this relationship than with a strictly Platonic one (as we would understand it now).[23] But, in fact, Cicero rejects the Socratic separation of philosophy and rhetoric, and he considers this rejection to be *the natural Academic viewpoint*. Let us see how this can be the case.

Agreeing with Isocrates' unified version of rhetoric and philosophy, for Cicero, the "severance of brain and tongue," of philosophy and rhetoric, carried out by Socrates in the *Gorgias* is a very unfortunate event[24]:

> …the persons engaged in handling and pursuing and teaching the subjects that we are now investigating were designated by a single title, the whole study and practice of the liberal sciences being entitled philosophy, [but] Socrates robbed them of this general designation, and in his discussions separated the science of wise thinking from that of elegant speaking, though in reality they are closely linked together… this is the source from which has sprung the undoubtedly absurd and unprofitable and reprehensible severance between the tongue and the brain, leading to our having one set of professors to teach us to think and another to teach us to speak… (*DO* III, 60-61).

Cicero clearly distances himself from Plato in this respect. Also, the Isocratean, fallibilistic motive is tied to his description of the art of speech:

> …the contents of philosophy are discovered by intellects of the keenest acumen in eliciting *the probable answer to every problem*, and the results are elaborated with practiced eloquence (*DO* III, 79, my emphasis).

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[23] For a more precise account of the influence of Isocrates on Cicero see H. M. Hubbell, *The influence of Isocrates on Cicero, Dionysius and Aristides* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1913).

[24] This criticism of the *Gorgias,* however, is in agreement with Plato's views in the *Phaedrus*.

This stance is considered by Cicero to be common to the First Academy and the Peripatetic school. The assertion appears both in *De Oratore* (III, 67) and *Academica* but is expounded in more detail in the latter's first book. There, Cicero gives an account of the development of the Hellenistic schools from the common root of Platonism. He argues that the First Academy and the Peripatetic school were, at the beginning, only different in settings but not in doctrine:

> ... originating in Plato, a thinker of manifold variety and fertility, there was established a philosophy that, though it had two appellations, was really a single uniform system, that of the Academic and the Peripatetic schools, which while agreeing in doctrine differed in name... (*A* I, 17).

The doctrine they both taught was a threefold system of knowledge. It encompassed a reflection on morals, a science of physics, and a dialectic, which Cicero describes as related to rhetoric:

> …under this head was imparted their whole doctrine of Dialectic, that is, speech cast in the form of logical argument; to this as a "counterpart" was added the faculty of Rhetoric, which sets out a continuous speech adapted to the purpose of persuasion. (*A* I, 32).

Clearly, Cicero was familiar with what we regard today as Aristotle's formulation of rhetoric. He considers this view to be not only a Peripatetic construct but also an original claim of the First Academics. In several passages, Cicero argues that dialectic, according to both schools, dealt not only with the rules of logic, but also with those of rhetoric. In *A* I, 5, for example, he says:

> … for our part [the Academics], we obey the rules of the logicians and of the orators also as if they were laws, for our school considers each of these faculties a merit…

And also in *A* I, 19:

> ...judgment of truth and falsehood, correctness and incorrectness, consistency and inconsistency in *oratorical* discourse (*in oratione pavumve*).

The First Academy (as well as the Peripatetics), then, considered dialectic as a way of controlling the logical validity of rhetorical arguments and not as a separate discipline.

As for the rules of oratory, many of them are formulated by Cicero in a way that seems rather a paraphrasis of Aristotle's *Rhetoric.* For instance, in *Partitiones Oratoria,* Cicero gives the following definition of the probable: "Let us for the sake of conveying our meaning define the term probable *as that which usually occurs in such and such way" (PO*, 34). And in *De Inventione*, Cicero characterizes invention as: "… thinking true or verisimilar things, which make probable a case" (*DI,* 9).

In sum, Academic philosophy in its beginnings shared with Peripatetic philosophy an unified understanding of rhetoric and dialectic. The modification of this doctrine, says Cicero, was only later undertaken by Zeno and Arcesilaus. Zeno, originally a member of the Academy, "instituted a reform of the system" that gave rise to the Stoic school (*A* I, 35). Arcesilaus, Zeno's pupil, opposed his dogmatic claims and instituted the skeptic Academy. As a result, the original unified doctrine of rhetoric and dialectic dissipated. The Stoics adopted the more Platonic stance against rhetoric and in favor of dialectic and the Middle Academic skeptics also became sharp dialecticians—particularly skilled in the art of arguing on both sides of a question.[25]

Cicero's extant text ends before he can completely account for this change of view and the later developments of the Middle Academy. In the last paragraph of the book, however, he begins to present Carneades' thought. He claims that "Carneades was acquainted with every department of philosophy" and that "he possessed an incredible facility..." The text becomes corrupt at this point, but we can suppose that Cicero meant to continue praising Carneades rhetorical ability. Carneades had, indeed, an "incredible facility" to speak, as it became legendary

[25] Arcesilaus and his successors until Carneades were not particularly committed to the art of rhetoric. From Brittain we obtain a general picture of the Middle Academics as joining the current dismissive views of rhetoric, which criticized the main features of the Hermagorian tradition. See Ch. Brittain, *Philo of Larissa,* 296-342.

from his participation in the embassy to Rome in 155 B.C., when he gave successive speeches for and against justice. We can also hypothesize that Cicero ends his account of the history of the Academy by commending Carneades' reunification of rhetoric and philosophy. Cicero's insistence on the agreement between Peripatetics and Academics would have found a nice closure if he had argued, at the end of Book I, that this unity was retrieved by the Academy of Carneades.

Although this is only a speculative claim, it would certainly help to explain Carneades' doctrinal commitments. As it stands, Carneades' doctrine of the *pithanon* (namely, the persuasive/probable) as a criterion for the justification of claims is a rather odd heir to Arcesilaus' tradition of skepticism. The Middle Academy's skeptical view is committed to dialectical argumentation (*pro* and *con*) and suspension of judgment; whereas Carneades fallibilism recommends evaluating probabilities and provisionally approving them. In my view, his theory shares the basic features of Isocrates' fallibilist anthropology and Aristotle's theory of probability, as we will see in what follows.

2. **Cicero's *Academica*: a Rhetorical Fallibilism**

In Book II of *Academica*, Cicero expounds the epistemological views of the Middle and New Academy, from Arcesilaus to Philo of Larissa. They constitute a stock of skeptical arguments used to counteract the dogmatic pretensions of the Stoics.

It is related that the most prominent heads of the Middle and New Academy, Arcesilaus and Carneades, were involved in stringent debates with their Stoic counterparts, Zeno and Chryssipus. In the course of these debates, the Academic viewpoint developed. Later, in the last years of the Academy, the dispute became also an internal issue. The last head of the school, Antiochus of Ascalon, adopted some of the dogmatic claims of the Stoics and argued that this

was the original Academic position. Against him, Philo of Larissa defended the Carneadean position as the primary doctrine of the New Academy.[26]

This doctrine is described at the end of Book II (the *Lucullus*) of the extant *Academica*, where Cicero opposes Lucullus' presentation of Antiochus' Stoic theory of truth. The doctrine that Cicero describes here as the Academic genuine stance can be generally depicted as having a negative, skeptic part and a positive, fallibilistic one. The negative part is attributed mainly to Arcesilaus, although it is known that Carneades used the same arguments to defeat the Stoic criterion of truth, i.e., *katalêpsis*. The positive part, however, constitutes the fallibilistic theory that appears to be Carneades' main innovation. I will now begin by describing the negative part of the doctrine, that is, the Academic refutation of Stoic dogmatism.

2.1. The Cataleptic Presentation as a Criterion of Truth

In general terms, Stoic epistemology holds that truth is available to human understanding by means of sense perceptions or presentations (*phantasia* in Greek, in Latin *uisum*). But since not all sense perceptions are truthful, a criterion is needed to distinguish true presentations from false ones. This criterion is a mark of some presentations, which are "impressed, sealed and moulded from a real object, in conformity with its reality" (*A* II, 76). The mark is nothing but the

[26] In view of these disagreements, Antiochus called his Academy the "Old Academy," while Philo named his the "New Academy." It is said that Philo also changed views and developed a dogmatic doctrine in his so-called "Roman Books." Accordingly, Charles Brittain argues for three phases in the thought of Philo. The second of these phases, called by Brittan "Philonian/Metrodorian," agrees with Cicero's depiction of Philo's version of Carneades in *Academica*. See Ch. Brittain, *Philo of Larissa*, 17.

presentations "perspicuity," that is, the quality of being produced by an object in such a way that it could not have been produced by any other one.[27]

Perspicuous presentations are apprehended in a way that causes the subject's unrestrained assent.[28] The Stoics call this particular manner of apprehension "grasping" (*catalêpsis*), and Cicero translates it to Latin as *comprehensio* or *percipio*. The presentations, accordingly, can be called "cataleptic" or "graspable presentations."

The Stoic criterion of truth is essential for both theoretical and practical purposes. First, knowledge, according to the Stoics, is entirely based on these perceptions. Presentations that do not have this mark only constitute the grounds for *opinion*. They are, to say it in a more modern way, obscure presentations, and whatever judgments we make on their account will always remain *uncertain*. All the arts and sciences, therefore, ought to be erected on the basis of perspicuous, cataleptic presentations.[29]

Second, since presentations move our appetites and our appetites lead us to action, we ought to be able to distinguish between cataleptic and non-cataleptic presentations when making

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[27] "... that presentation... was, as Zeno defined it, presentation impressed and moulded from the object from which it came in a form such as it could not have if it came from an object that was not the one that it actually did come from" (*A* II, 18).

[28] Whether assent to perceivable presentations is immediate and instinctive or voluntary and the outcome of reflection is a matter of dispute. Cicero presents both cases in *Academica*. First, he says that "to these presentations received by the senses he [Zeno] joins the act of mental assent, which he makes out to reside within us and to be voluntary" (*A* I, 40-41). But he also argues in favor of a more immediate assent by using the metaphor of the scale: "… for as the scale of a balance must necessarily sink when weights are put in it, the mind must necessarily yield to clear presentations" (*A* II, 38). According to Couissin's rendering, the former is the case (see P. Couissin, "The Stoicism of the New Academy," p. 35). Bett's characterization of assent, however, involves cases in which it is implicit—an interpretation that relies more heavily on Cicero's metaphor. See R. Bett, "Carneades' Distinction between Assent and Approval" *The Monist* 73 (1990): 3-20.

[29] "... a sensation so firmly grasped as to be irremovable from reasoning he [Zeno] termed knowledge, but a sensation not so grasped he termed ignorance, and this was the source of all opinion, an unstable impression akin to falsehood and ignorance" (*A* I, 41).

moral choices. In other words, moral deliberation as well must be based on knowledge and not merely on opinion. Opinion may lead to moral error (if false); while knowledge always leads to virtue. This is the crucial characteristic of the Stoic sage—that he acts entirely on the basis of cataleptic presentations and is never unsure of his moral decisions.[30]

The Academics did not believe that such a graspable difference between false and true presentations existed. They attacked the cataleptic presentation as a criterion of truth because they believed that there was no mark inherent to a presentation that would indicate its absolute truthfulness. It is not that they denied that true presentations existed, but they believed that we could never *know for sure*, i.e., with certainty, whether a presentation was true or false. Accordingly, human action is always grounded on opinion, and is never the result of infallible knowledge.

The main Academic thesis against Stoic dogmatism is that to any true presentation there corresponds another that looks exactly like it but is false. Hence, the presentation itself, i.e., its manner of appearance, can never be taken as the criterion to distinguish truth from falsity (*A* II, 83). Several arguments sustained this claim, e.g., the unreliability of the senses, the striking similarity of some objects (like eggs and grains of sand), the indiscernibility of dreams or hallucinations from reality, among others. The Stoics counterargued that, although in some cases presentations are not distinguishable, this does not necessarily entail that all presentations are *by nature* indistinguishable. But the Academics view was precisely this—that to any presentation, no

[30] Cicero describes the wise man's moral resoluteness as based on theoretical certainty: "... if this consistency had nothing that it grasped and knew, whence, I ask, or how would it be engendered? Consider the ideal good man, who has resolved to endure all torments and to be mangled by intolerable pain, rather than betray either his duty or his promise. Why has he saddled himself with such burdensome rules... unless he has given his assent to things that cannot possibly be false?" (*A* II, 23).

matter how perspicuous it seems, there may be opposed another one of the same apparent evidence.

The point is, in fact, a very common one in the skeptical tradition. From the pre-Socratic Democritus to Socrates himself, the skeptics' main strategy to undermine any knowledge claim had been to argue in favor of its opposite—that is, to show the *equal validity* of the counterargument. This methodological procedure became the very contention that the Academics presented against the Stoic criterion of truth. No presentation is cataleptic because, as it has been shown in the practice of the skeptics, to any proposition (based on a particular presentation) another proposition of equal validity (based on the contrary presentation) may be opposed.

The necessary outcome of this argument is the acknowledgment of uncertainty (*acatalêpton*) and the advisability of suspending judgment *(epochê)* in all matters. This is the characteristic position of the Middle Academy, under the leadership of Arcesilaus:

> Arcesilaus said that there is nothing that can be known, ... nor is there anything that can be perceived or understood, and for these reasons, he said, no one must make any positive statement or affirmation or give the approval of his assent to any proposition... (*A* I, 45).

The Middle Academy, thus, refuted the Stoic theory of *catalêpsis* but did not produce a positive alternative doctrine of knowledge. Arcesilaus' position is, in this respect, a full-fledged skepticism. It is characterized by three important features: first, the use of dialectical argumentation *pro* and *con* (also called, *in utramque parte)*; second, the general claim that since there are no graspable presentations, all that remains is uncertainty and opinion; and third, the recommendation of suspending judgment (*epochê*).

Carneades, in turn, uses the same skeptical arguments of the Middle Academy in order to refute the Stoics, but he does not agree with Arcesilaus' recommendation of *epochê*. As we will

see in what follows, this attitude separates his viewpoint from Arcesilaus' completely skeptical stance.[31]

2.2. *From Skepticism to Fallibilism*

Carneades' positive doctrine is a fallibilistic or probabilistic theory of justification of belief, based on degrees of approximation to truth. This doctrine mediates between the full-fledged skepticism of Arcesilaus and the dogmatism of the Stoics. Its main assumption is that although there are no cataleptic presentations and hence it is impossible to distinguish with certainty what is true from what is false, this should not preclude theoretical investigation and practical deliberation:

> For even though many difficulties hinder every branch of knowledge, and both the subjects themselves and our faculties of judgment involve such a lack of certainty that the most ancient and learned thinkers had good reason for distrusting their ability to discover what they desired, nevertheless they did not give up, nor yet will we abandon in exhaustion our zeal for research; and the sole object of our discussions is by arguing on both sides to draw out and give shape to some result that may be either true or the nearest possible approximation to the truth (*A* II, 7).

In order to continue investigating, presentations must be assessed for their validity. But with perspicuity no longer being a criterion, it is not easy to choose among more or less trustworthy presentations. A new criterion or a series of criteria are needed to this end.

Carneades proposes a new classification of presentations, dividing them into probable and non-probable ones (A II, 99). A probable presentation is different from a non-probable one in that nothing contradicts its probability, or, in Cicero's words, its probability is not "hampered" by anything (*nulla re impedirentur*) (*A* II, 104). Non-probable presentations, on the other hand, are

[31] It has also been argued that Carneades only held the fallibilistic positive doctrine dialectically, that is, as a weapon to undermine Stoic dogmatism. However, this interpretation is not very plausible. See note 6, p. 40.

presentations whose probability is hampered from all flanks. This leaves us with a gradation of presentations: presentations are more or less probable depending on the strength of the hampering co-presentations.

In *Academica,* Cicero does not tell us much more about how to apply this rather general criterion. However, in *Outlines of Pyrrhonism*, Sextus Empiricus gives a more detailed account of the Academic gradation of presentations.[32] Sextus says:

> And they [The Academics] draw distinctions among plausible *phantasia*: some, they think are just plausible, some are *plausible* and *tested*, and some are plausible, tested and *stable*. For example, when a rope is lying coiled up in a dark room, a person who enters the room suddenly gets a simply plausible *phantasia* that it is a snake; but to a person who has looked carefully around and has considered the circumstances—for example that it does not move, that it is of such and such color, and so on—it appears to be a rope in accord with a *phantasia* that is plausible and tested. And a *phantasia* that is in addition stable is such as the following. After Alcestis died, Heracles is said to have brought her up again from Hades and to have shown her to Admetus, who got a plausible and tested *phantasia* of Alcestis, but since he knew that she had died, his intellect withdrew the assent and leaned towards disbelief. Accordingly, the New Academics prefer the plausible and tested *phantasia* to the simply plausible, and to both of them, the phantasia that is plausible, tested and stable.[33]

Sextus presents here a set of more precise criteria to determine the probability of presentations. A presentation is more or less probable depending on whether it complies with the further criteria of *testability* and *stability*. First, a *tested* presentation is a presentation that is not only probable, but also empirically examined. We can say, in terms of Cicero, that this presentation is not hampered by co-presentations that pertain to their empirical circumstances.

Second, a *stable* presentation, according to Sextus, is one whose empirical aspects agree with previous empirically acquired information or previous related beliefs. Therefore, Sextus tells us

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[32] Following Glucker: "Without Sextus we would have been utterly in the dark as to the meaning of the degrees of *probabilitas* specified merely by the Latin terms in *Luc.* 33-4." J. Glucker, *Antiochus and the Late Academy*, 113.

[33] Sextus Empiricus, *Outlines of Pyrrhonism,* Book I, 227-229.

that since Admetus had previously learned that Alcestis had died, even if he had a probable and tested presentation of Alcestis, he did not assent to it. There was, in this case, a hampering presentation concerning past information related to Alcestis' state of health. This hampering co-presentation reduced, as it were, the probability of the presentation in question.

If we translate now Sextus' criteria in terms of Ciceronian "hampering," we may obtain the following classification:

PRESENTATION	DEGREE OF PROBABILITY	DEFINITION
Stable presentation	Very high	No hampering immediate and past co-presentations
Tested presentation	High	No hampering immediate co-presentations
Merely probable presentation	Medium	Some hampering past or immediate presentations
Improbable presentation	Very low	Many hampering presentations of all sorts

This general theory of probability has important consequences. First, from it arises a conception of knowledge that agrees with what we call today a "non-foundational epistemology." In other words, the sciences and the arts no longer need to justify themselves on the basis of apodictically certain or absolutely necessary claims. Knowledge can be of things that "for the most part happen in such and such way" and not necessarily of things that *always* happen in the same way. This, of course, gives room to the inclusion of inductive methods in science.[34]

[34] As I indicated in the Introduction (n. 4, p. 5), Hume's theory of causality is indisputably shaped by this doctrine. I will not deal with this problem in depth, however, since it belongs to what could be called a theoretical or scientific fallibilism, and my main purpose here is to explore fallibilism concerning metaphysical claims.

Second, the criterion of *stability* supports a theory of knowledge not only based on the "correspondence" between presentation and reality, but also on the "coherence" among presentations. Statements are evaluated both on their degree of similarity to perceivable states of affairs, and on their mutual reinforcement. According to this, a theory or a general thesis whose particular presentations agree with each other is more persuasive (or, again, closer to the truth), than one in which the different presentations are in conflict (as, for example, Admetus' theory about Alcestis' state of being).

Third, Carneades' theory of probability aims at providing the ground to hold particular presentations as probable enough for practical purposes. In other words, Carneades considers that even though there are no cataleptic presentations and, thus, we can never claim certainty in moral deliberation, probabilities are good enough criteria to act.

These criteria to determine the probability of a presentation or of a judgment are to be applied, according to Cicero, not only to empirical claims but also to non-verifiable ones. Cicero also follows the Carneadean principle of probability in his discussion of moral and metaphysical issues, in other philosophical dialogues such as *De Finibus*, *De Natura Deorum* and *Tusculan Disputations*. There, Cicero considers the different claims held by the main Hellenistic schools (Epicurean, Stoic and Academic) concerning happiness, the nature of the gods, and the immortality of soul[35] respectively. In his introduction of *De Natura Deorum,* for instance, Cicero briefly presents the Academic fallibilistic position (*DND* I, 12) and argues that he will apply the criterion of the *pithanon* to all the current theories concerning the nature of the gods in order to ascertain their validity:

> This is a topic on which it seems proper to summon all the world to sit in judgment and pronounce which of these doctrines is the true one. If it turn out that all the schools agree, or if

[35] The immortality of the soul is discussed in Book I of *Tusculan Disputations*. The rest of the book is devoted to the psychological explanation of emotions, according to the different Hellenistic schools.

> any one philosopher be found who has discovered the truth, then but not before, I will convict the Academy of captiousness. This being so, I feel dispose to… attend in court, try the case, and deliver their verdict as to what opinions we are to hold about religion, piety and holiness, about ritual, about honour and loyalty to oaths, about temples, shrines and solemn sacrifices… for all this matters ultimately depend upon the this question of the nature of the immortal gods. Surely, such wide diversity of opinion… must affect even those who think that they possess certain knowledge, with a feeling of doubt (*DND* I, 13-14).

In his characteristic ironic way, Cicero claims that if, after careful examination, a specific theory concerning the nature of the gods is ascertained as "the true one," then he would be willing to abandon the Academic theory of probability. But since this, as the dialogue attests, cannot happen, our beliefs on the nature of the Gods and our actions concerning them should be guided by the most probable or persuasive claim. It is worth noticing that Cicero uses the metaphor of a trial, in order to depict the sort of scenario in which these theories will be presented. It seems that, acting as a rhetorician, Cicero will argue both in favor and against each position, and finally give a verdict on the most probable one.[36]

In *Tusculan Disputations,* Cicero proceeds in a similar way to assess the beliefs in the mortality or immortality of the soul. He argues:

> These, unless I happen to have missed any, are the views held about the [immortality or mortality of the] soul. … Which of these views is the true one it is for a divine being to determine. Which is most probable, is a difficult question (*TD* I, 23).

Whether the soul is mortal or immortal is a difficult question to which only a probable answer can be given. In Book I of the *Tusculan Disputations*, the Platonic thesis that the soul is immortal is evaluated as the most probable and useful one. According to Cicero, even if we cannot argue with certainty that the soul is immortal, this belief can be held for practical reasons:

[36] The same strategy will be used by Kant in the "Dialectic of Pure Reason," as we will see in Chapter IV, section 3., pp. 125-134.

it helps us to overcome the fear of death, without which our lives are more authentically and responsibly led. Hence, it is worth holding this very persuasive belief, even if only for its practical consequences. But what does it mean to hold a belief for its practical consequences or merely in order to further action? In the following section I will examine this problem in more detail.

2.3. *The problem of* apraxia

Carneades' fallibilistic theory helps to resolve a practical issue over which Stoics and skeptics quarreled for a very long time. It is the so-called problem of *apraxia*, which may be illustrated as a dilemma concerning the figures of the Stoic and the skeptic sages. The Stoic sage affirms only what is true, never erring (i.e. affirming the false) or holding mere opinions (i.e. affirming the probable). His whole life is guided by perceivable presentations, which bring about his legitimate assent (*syncatathesis,* rendered in Latin as *adsensione).* Merely probable presentations he completely distrusts in order not to fall into error. The skeptic sage, on the other hand, holding that there are no presentations of this sort, never gives his assent (*adsensione*) to any presentation at all. He practices the suspension of belief (*epochê*) in order to attain psychological peace of mind (*ataraxia*).

The core of the dilemma is that both sages seem to be logically confined to inactive lives (*apraxia*). If there are no graspable or cataleptic presentations, or in other words, if knowledge is never certain, both sages would have to suspend judgment—the Stoic sage because he does not think that probabilities should be followed,[37] and the skeptic sage because suspension of belief leads to peace of mind. But if both sages suspend judgment, none would be able to act, because

[37] The syllogism, attributed to Arcesilaus, is the following: "if the wise man ever assents to anything, he will sometimes also form an opinion. But he will never hold an opinion; therefore he will never assent to anything" (*A* II, 67).

judging is the basis of action. Hence, only non sages (regular people) would act, for they only would adopt merely probable beliefs. But, then, what is the purpose of wisdom if not to guide action?

Cicero solves the dilemma by rejecting both sorts of "wisdom." For him, a sage is rather a prudent man, one that, acknowledging that no presentation is completely trustworthy, guides his life by the most probable presentations. Whether this characterization of the sage is Carneadean or not seems to have been a matter of debate. In *Academica*, Lucullus affirms that "Carneades was also in the habit of taking refuge in the assertion that the wise man will occasionally hold an opinion" (*A* II, 59). But Cicero also says that, according to Clitomachus, "Carneades did not so much accept this view as advance it in argument" (*A* II, 78). It seems as though Clitomachus denied the view, while Philo or Metrodorus held it. In any case, even if Carneades had not openly endorsed the idea of a sage that abides by probabilities, it nicely follows from his theory, and Cicero seems to consider it as the only reasonable outcome.

The difficulty may have been just a matter of dealing with new, Carneadean terminology. For Cicero argues that the prudent sage actually does not give his assent (*adsensio*) to probable presentations. He merely gives his "approval" *(probatio)* to them:

> …the wise man follows many things probable, that he has not grasped, nor perceived, nor assented to but that possess verisimilitude, and if he were not to approve them, all life would be done away with (*A* II, 99).

Now, what is the exact difference between "assent" and "approval"? From *A* II, 103-105, we can infer some characteristics of both terms:

(a) Assent is immediate and a correlate of graspable or cataleptic presentations only.

(b) Assent has a theoretical character; approval only a practical one.

(c) Assent is about things as they are; approval about things as they appear to be. In other words, assent involves judgments of the sort: "the sky is blue," while approval only judgments like: " the sky appears or seems to be blue."

(e) The sage gives his approval only to unhindered or highly probable/persuasive presentations.

Richard Bett characterizes assent as "taking a stand on the truth of the impression." Approval instead, "involves no commitment, one way or the other, as to whether the impression approved is really true or false."[38] In other words, when we assent to a presentation, we consider the judgment involving it to be true, that is, we claim to be certain of a particular state of affairs. As Bett affirms, "assenting to an impression amounts to *adopting a certain belief*."[39] In the case of the Stoic sage, this belief is always a true one, namely, knowledge.

Cicero (or Carneades) considers that since no presentation has a mark that guarantees its truthfulness, the sage can be wrong when assenting. Thus, the best the sage can do is never to assent to presentations, no matter how perspicuous they seem to be. In other words, the sage would never commit to judgments of the type: "this *is* the case." But he can still give his approval to probable presentations by saying "indeed, this *appears* to be the case." When this happens, however, the sage does not hold a *belief*. He merely holds an *opinion*. In this point I disagree with Bett, who considers belief and opinion to involve the same sort of psychological attitude, namely, assent; rather, I agree with Michael Frede's characterization of the difference between approval and assent as the psychological states involved in "having a view" (opining)

[38] R. Bett, "Carneades' Distinction between Approval and Assent," 10.

[39] Ibid.

and "making a claim" (believing).[40] Approving or holding opinions is enough for the fallibilistic, prudent kind of sage to conduct his life in all practical matters.

We can characterize opinions as 'provisional' judgments: judgments that are both revisable and that "make good provision" for the future.[41] In other words, opinions are judgments made in the awareness of their tentative character—we know that the state of affairs to which they refer may turn out to be otherwise. However, we still hold them because they provide us with the basis for action.

Cicero's favorite example of approving to a presentation for the sake of action is the wise man's evaluation of the convenience of going on a trip:

> … when a wise man is going on board a ship surely he has not got the knowledge already grasped in his mind and perceived that he will make the voyage as he intends? How can he have it? But if for instance, he were setting out from here to Puteoli, a distance of four miles, with a reliable crew and a good helmsman and in the present calm weather, it would appear probable that he would get there safe. He will therefore be guided by presentations of this sort to adopt plans of action and of inaction… (*A* II, 100).

If, says Cicero, the weather looks calm, the ship seems safe, the crew has a good reputation, and the distance to travel is not too long, the wise man will embark confidently. None of these judgments involve certainty; none is even *taken for true*. The sage does not *believe* that the ship is safe or that the weather is calm. He just judges that they *seem* to be so. They are judgments on the appearance of things, not on their actual being.

Another way to put this difference is in terms of their theoretical and practical aspects. Even if the theoretical questions about the weather and the ship remain without answer, action

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[40] See M. Frede, "The Skeptics Two Kinds of Assent" in *The Original Sceptics: a Controversy,* Myles Burnyeat, S. Marc Cohen, et al, eds., (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, 1997), 127-151.

[41] It is in this double sense that Descartes referred to the judgments that make his provisional morals. Once again, a very Ciceronian theme. See R. Descartes, *Discourse de la méthode*, VI. 22.

is not precluded. Their practical aspect may be expressed in the questions: does the ship *seem* sufficiently safe *to* go on board? Does the weather *appear* to be sufficiently calm *to* sail away? To these questions we can answer positively or negatively, and proceed to act accordingly. The same could be said, according to Cicero, of metaphysical claims. To the question about the mortality or immortality of the soul, we can answer after careful rational examination that it *appears to be the case* that the soul is immortal. In that case, as Cicero suggests, we would have reasons to not fear death and live a more authentic life. But we should never hold this as a belief, that is, we should not claim knowledge (let alone certainty) of such supernatural state of life.

2.4. *Carneadean Fallibilism and Pyrrhonian Skepticism*

In sum, the attitude of the fallibilistic or prudent sage is very different from those of the Stoic and the Academic skeptic sages. The fallibilistic sage does not claim to have certain knowledge but does not suspend judgment either. Rather, he follows probable presentations and produces a "detached" sort of judgment called "opinion" to act on its basis.

There is, however, one more ancient characterization of the skeptic sage that looks very similar to the Carneadean, in that it also stresses the "detached" acceptance of appearances as the basis for action. This is the skeptic sage as incarnated in the figure of Pyrrho.

The historical relationship between Academic and Pyrrhonian skepticism is very obscure. Some find the origin of Pyrrhonism in Academic skepticism by claiming that Aenesidemus, an Academic philosopher himself, left the Academy and revived Pyrrhonism as a reaction to Carneadean fallibilism. Others argue that Pyrrho's pupil, Timon, a contemporary of Arcesilaus, influenced the latter's views, and so Academic skepticism is to be considered an heir to Pyrrhonism. Be that as it may, the similarities between their doctrines are worth a brief

examination, in order to more fully understand the place that fallibilism takes between dogmatism and all kinds of skepticism, including Pyrrhonism.

Pyrrhonism, as we know it from Sextus Empiricus' account, has two important features in common with the skepticism of the Middle Academy of Arcesilaus: the method of arguing on both sides, *pro* and *con*, and the suspension of judgment or *epochê*. Sextus characterizes the skeptical sage as one who, aware of the equal validity (or "equipollence") of most presentations, withholds belief and through this means achieves peace of mind (*ataraxia*).[42]

However, when facing practical matters, Sextus affirms, the Pyrrhonist has a criterion to guide his life, i.e., "the appearance."[43] He withholds judgment as to how things really are, not as to how they appear to be. This affirmation is in principle amenable to the characterization of Carneadean "approval" that was just presented. Could we say, then, that the attitude of the Pyrrhonian sage is like that of the fallibilistic sage?

Not really. There is a crucial difference between Carneades' and Sextus Empiricus' attitude towards both theoretical and practical matters. The Pyrrhonian way stops at equipollence—it does not go further into the consideration of more or less weighty probabilities.[44] Sextus' most famous example is that of the taste of honey. The Pyrrhonist tastes honey, and it seems sweet to him. But given the claim that to other animals and also to other human beings honey tastes bitter,[45] the Pyrrhonist withholds judgment about the real sweetness of honey. He says: "It appears to me that honey is sweet, but I do not know whether it is really sweet." Acting in accordance with this *opinion*, the Pyrrhonist buys honey, that is, if he likes sweet things.

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[42] Sextus Empiricus, *Outlines of Pyrrhonism,* Book I. 10.

[43] Sextus Empiricus*, Outlines of Pyrrhonism*, Book I. 21-22.

[44] See Chapter III, section 2.2., pp. 89-95 for Hume's view of the difference between Pyrrhonism and Academic fallibilism.

[45] Applying the first and second *modes* or *tropes*.

Now, the fallibilistic alternative is completely different. The fallibilist sage tastes honey and has the impression that it is sweet. She then proceeds to examine the claim as a skeptic, using *pro* and *con* arguments, and realizes the fact that to some other animals and human beings honey tastes bitter. At this point, however, the fallibilist *does not withhold judgment*. Rather, she continues investigating, namely, examining the degree of probability attached to the presentation of honey's sweetness. She asks her friends, for example, their opinion about honey, and, as a result, acknowledges that honey seems to taste sweet to *many* human beings. Then she wonders what is the more "reputable opinion" about honey, and remembers that this opinion is that "honey tastes sweet." She may even try the experiment of giving some honey to her dog, only to find out that the dog also appears to like it! With all this information in mind, the fallibilist sage, although still refraining from asserting the sweetness of honey as certain knowledge, feels rather confident to hold the claim that it is very probable that honey tastes sweet and does not hesitate to act on its basis.

This is how the fallibilist sage differs from the Pyrrhonian sage. Although the fallibilist sage also guides her life by appearances, she examines such appearances and only gives her approval to "unhampered" ones. She does not advise *epochê,* but rather a thorough examination of the presentations' degree of probability on the basis of which it is legitimate to form opinions. In other words, this person is a careful opinion holder. She goes through the exercise of testing all presentations empirically, as well as evaluating their agreement or disagreement with previously held opinions, before deciding to adopt a specific course of action.

Pyrrhonic *epochê* entails a very different attitude. The opening passage of Sextus' *Outlines of Pyrrhonism* may be useful to better understand this view. Sextus classifies the schools of philosophy according to their attitude towards investigation, and claims that only the Pyrrhonists (which he considers to be the only real skeptics) "continue to search." The dogmatists stop

inquiry when they consider that they have found a true presentation, and the Academics, not finding any trustworthy presentation, hold that knowledge is impossible and forego any further inquiry. The Pyrrhonists, on the other hand, continue searching:

> When people search for something, the likely outcome is that either they find it or, not finding it, they accept that it cannot be found, or they continue to search. So also in the case of what is sought in philosophy, I think, some people have claimed to have found the truth, others have asserted that it cannot be apprehended, and others are still searching. Those who think that they have found it are the Dogmatists, properly so called – for example, the followers of Aristotle and Epicurus, the Stoics and certain others. The followers of Clitomachus and Carneades, as well as other Academics, have asserted that it cannot be apprehended. The Skeptics continue to search.[46]

Setting aside Sextus' unfair criticism of the Academics (it is clear that he interprets here Clitomachus and Carneades as strictly following Arcesilaus' radical skepticism), it seems from this passage that he considers it possible to "withhold judgment" and at the same time "continue to search." How can both activities be joined together?

In fact, the aim of investigation for the Pyrrhonian is the *renovation of the state of epochê* through the invention of equally valid claims on both sides of a question—the application of the *ten modes* or *tropes*. Inquiry, for these skeptics, does not aim at attaining knowledge about the world's states of affairs, but it aims at producing, by artificial, dialectical means, the state of suspension of judgment that leads to peace of mind. Investigation for Pyrrhonism is, in this way, not an epistemic activity but rather a therapeutic endeavor.

The Carneadean attitude towards investigation is more similar to the dogmatists' view, except that, borrowing Sextus' terminology, the fallibilist actually "continues investigating." First, the fallibilist does not suspend judgment after arguing on both sides of the question. In fact, to pretend that two opposite presentations are always equivalent in truth-value is for a fallibilist an

[46] Sextus Empiricus, *Outlines of Pyrrhonism*, Book I, 1-4.

absurdity. To express this view, Cicero uses the example of Anaxagoras' skeptical claim, according to which "snow is not more white than it is black." He says that

> the [fallibilist] wise man … will be readier at proving that snow is white than Anaxagoras was (who not only denied that this was so, but asserted that to him snow did not even appeared to be white)… (*A* II, 100).

In the eyes of a fallibilist, suspension of judgment caused by "equipollence" or argumentation on both sides of the issue amounts to ending the investigation before it has been thoroughly undertaken. The fallibilist shares with the dogmatist this criticism of Pyrrhonism or any other form of skepticism. Had it been historically possible, Cicero would have criticized Sextus on the grounds that the Pyrrhonist withholds judgment rather *rashly*. This is certainly a surprising accusation for a skeptic, but in this case it would be a legitimate one. In their effort to avoid precipitation, the skeptics fail to go further enough into any sort of inquiry—they do not surpass the artificially attained equal validity of their arguments. This attitude is a defect of thought because if their conclusions were sufficiently "tested," the skeptics would find that one presentation is always more probable than its opposite—e.g., snow is actually most of the time white, and only in a few occasions black (when it is dirty).

3. **Rhetorical Fallibilism and Skeptical Dialectic**

As I stated at the beginning of this chapter, the key to the Academic transition from skepticism to fallibilism may be found in Carneades' adherence to the Academic-Peripatetic doctrine of a unified (or reunified) dialectic and rhetoric. I believe that there is a rhetorical motive behind the Carneadean renunciation of *epochê*, and the understanding of inquiry in terms of evaluation of probabilities.

If rhetoric completes dialectic, as the Peripatetics and early Academics thought, by supplying it with the *organon* to invent probable arguments, why not consider also that the

dialectical competence of arguing pro and against a claim (which leads to the rejection of certainty and to the suspension of judgment) may be complemented by a topical argumentation that examines the probability of each claim?

As a refuting exercise, skeptical dialectic uses logic in order to find contradictions and invalidate claims. But rhetoric is best used when it aims at the opposite purpose, namely, at making "the weakest claim the strongest." A metaphor may be useful to understand this difference. Skeptical dialectic resembles the peeling of an onion. Every layer of the onion is an opinion. All opinions together (the onion itself) constitute a body of reputable belief, i.e., a well-established doctrine or theory. The skeptic takes off each layer of the onion until there is nothing left. He refutes each opinion by showing either how it is intrinsically contradictory (in the manner of Socrates), or how there is an equally valid opposing opinion (in the manner of the Middle Academics and Pyrrhonians). Rhetorical exercise, in contrast, is like the forming of an onion. A particularly weak or uncertain claim is made stronger by inventing probable arguments that add to its general cogency. Every layer of the onion is one of these probable arguments. At the end, the claim may still not be true, but it approximates to truth—i.e., it is probable. A discourse's persuasive power is given, not by the accurateness of each of its arguments, but by its exhaustiveness. When a claim has been examined on each flank, and it turns out to be more probable the more arguments add to it, the discourse is rhetorically effective.

Carneades' theory of probability shares this spirit of rhetorical argumentation. Just as rhetorical invention provides an *organon* to produce probable arguments, Carneades' criteria to evaluate the probability of a presentation supplies the epistemological basis to assess their validity. By choosing the arguments that are more probable/persuasive, orators enact the principles of Carneades' fallibilist epistemology. As Cicero argues:

> … If… you choose to follow the famous Pericles of old, or even our friend Demosthenes… and if you have grown to love that glorious and supreme ideal… the perfect orator, you are bound to accept either the modern dialectic of Carneades or the earlier method of Aristotle (*DO* III, 71).

Recapitulating, in *Academica,* Cicero presents a fallibilistic theory of truth that has a rhetorical foundation. Such foundation may have been taken from the tradition of an Isocratean and Peripatetic rhetoric. In this tradition, rhetoric is not understood as separated from philosophy, but it aligns with moral deliberation and a non-dogmatic understanding of knowledge. Carneades, influenced by this conception of rhetoric, is able to go beyond the skepticism of Arcesilaus. Instead of dialectical *pro* and *con* argumentation and subsequent *epochê*, Carneades endorses topical argumentation and the examination of probabilities. He also endorses the idea of a sage who acts on the basis of probabilities, and thus, excels at moral deliberation.

Chapter III

Pyrrhonism vs. Academic Fallibilism:

Kant's Skeptical Procedures in the *Critique of Pure Reason*

> All skeptical polemicizing is properly directed only against the dogmatist,
> who continues gravely along his path without any mistrust
> of his original objective principles, i.e., without critique,
> in order to unhinge his concept and bring him to self knowledge.
> Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*

In order to establish a connection between the teachings of Cicero's rhetorical fallibilism and Kant's critical philosophy, I would like to begin by examining Kant's attitude towards the epistemological position from which fallibilism usually arises—i.e., skepticism. This aspect of Kant's thought has usually been connected with the refutation of two forms of modern skepticism—Cartesian and Berkeleyan idealism, and Humean empirical skepticism concerning causality. As Paul Guyer affirms, Kant's *First Critique* intends to provide a response (if not a complete refutation) to these sorts of skepticism.[1]

However, Kant does not only consider that skepticism ought to be challenged by critical philosophy. As Rudolf Makkreel argues,[2] Kant also claims that critical philosophy ought to

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[1]See Paul Guyer, "Kant on Common Sense and Scepticism" *Kantian Review* 7 (2003): 1-37.

[2] Rudolf Makkreel, "Kant's Responses to Skepticism" in *The Skeptical Tradition around 1800,* J. van der Zande and R.H. Popkin eds. (Netherlands: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1998), 101-109.

involve skeptical presuppositions and methods, in order to undermine the pretensions of metaphysical reasoning.

Following this suggestion, in this chapter I argue in favor of a connection between Kant's view of the kind of skeptical procedure that is useful for critical philosophy and the skepticism–or rather fallibilism–of the New Academy. The first part of the chapter is devoted to the examination of Kant's description of the skeptical method in his *Lectures on Logic*.[3] Although Kant's understanding of this method has been usually linked to Pyrrhonism, I argue here that it agrees more with the Academic fallibilism of Carneades as depicted and embraced by Cicero. I also claim that Kant's understanding of this method was influenced by Hume's own fallibilistic or Academic attitude, expressed both in his *Inquiry Concerning the Human Understanding* and the *Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion*. Kant's early treatise *The Dreams of a Spirit Seer (1766)* already shows traces of the fallibilistic outlook that he describes in the *Logic*.

In the second part of the chapter, I consider Kant's understanding of dialectic in its twofold characterization: as a "logic of illusion" and as the method to uncover such illusions. In his explanation of the way in which dialectic functions, both to deceive reason and to conjure its illusions, Kant relies on a discussion that is reminiscent of the Academic-Stoic controversy on the validity of *catalêpsis* as a criterion of truth. I suggest an interpretation of this argument. Finally, in a sort of terminological excursus, I offer a hypothesis regarding the historical origin of Kant's use of the term "dialectic."

[3] In what follows, *Logic* or *LL*. I will include in parentheses the title of the specific set of lectures and the standard numeration.

1. **Transcendental Critique as a Mature Exercise of Reason**

In the Preface to the A Edition of the *Critique of Pure Reason*, Kant tells us that his time exhibits a mature power of judgment characterized by its ability to criticize itself:

> [Our age's] ripened power of judgment... will no longer put off with illusory knowledge, and... demands that reason should take on anew the most difficult of its tasks, namely, that of self-knowledge... (Axii).[4]

However, in order for reason to be mature enough to undertake its own examination, it must have gone through the previous stages of dogmatisms and skeptical doubt:

> The first step in matters of pure reason, which characterizes its childhood, is dogmatic. The ... second step is skeptical, and gives evidence of the caution of the power of judgment sharpened by experience (A761/B78).

Mature reason overcomes the candid dogmatism of childhood and the arrogant skepticism of youth. Both dogmatic and skeptical philosophers are, in a way, immature thinkers. On the one hand, the dogmatists, that is, the rationalists that strictly follow the Leibnizian-Wolffian tradition, are depicted by Kant as naïve and prejudiced thinkers, who have the

> ...presumption of getting on solely with pure cognition from (philosophical) concepts according to principles, which reason has been using for a long time, without first inquiring in what way and by what right it has obtained them (Bxxxv).

The skeptics, on the other hand (more precisely Descartes, Berkeley, and Hume), are characterized by Kant as "a kind of nomads who abhor all permanent cultivation of the soil" (Aix).

However, reason in its maturity not only overcomes the vices of its previous stages—it also incorporates their virtues. According to R. Makkreel, Kant makes use of dogmatic and skeptical

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[4] Also in footnote: "Our age is the genuine age of criticism, to which everything must submit.... [in order to] lay claim to that unfeigned respect that reason grants only to that which has been able to withstand its free and public examination" (Axi).

methods of inquiry in his critical philosophy even if his enterprise is no longer skeptical or dogmatic:

> The critical standpoint seems to surpass dogmatism and skepticism without discarding all dogmatic and skeptic procedures. Specifically, Kant still finds it necessary to come up with "dogmatic proofs" to ground the natural sciences and to apply a "skeptical method" to the dialectic that is generated by metaphysical speculation about things-in-themselves that transcend the limits of experience.[5]

Thus, critical philosophy incorporates the *procedures* of dogmatists and skeptics but not their corresponding *outlooks*. In regards to the skeptical procedure, Kant argues that even if

> …the skeptical procedure is not, to be sure, itself *satisfying* for questions of reason, ...it is nevertheless *preparatory* for arousing its caution and showing it fundamental means for securing its rightful possessions (A769/B797, Kant's emphasis).

But what sort of skeptical procedure does Kant have in mind? In the following section I provide a closer examination to Kant's understanding of this skeptical method.[6]

2. **Kant's Description of the Skeptical Method**

The first characterization we obtain of the skeptical method that, in Kant's view, should be used by critical philosophy is negative—i.e., it is not Hume's method. Kant has referred to the latter as "the censorship of reason," which "leads to doubt about all transcendental use of principles" (A7761-B789).

This denomination, the "censorship of reason," should draw our attention. As a "censorship," Hume's method is compared to some sort of *heteronomous* device—an external rule or coercion of reason, which certainly serves the purpose of checking reason's dogmatic

[5] R. Makkreel, "Kant's Responses to Skepticism," 102.

[6] I will not refer to Kant's use of the dogmatic procedure because it would involve a discussion of the "Analytic," which would take us astray from the purpose of tracing a fallibilist motive in Kant's critique of metaphysics.

impulses but does it, as it were, from outside.[7] It applies an external, empirically grounded doubt to the transcendental conditions of reason. Kant's criticism is based on his consideration that the Humean argument about causality, according to which the judgment "every event has a cause" is a hypothesis acquired from experience. In this sense, Hume aligns this very principle with synthetic *a posteriori* judgments. But, since every hypothesis awaits falsification, Hume's doubt about causality is itself susceptible of doubt. It is, in other words, a contingent doubt:

> The same thing happens to Hume that brings down skepticism, namely, he is himself doubted, for his objections rest only on *facta,* which are contingent, but not on principles that could effect a necessary renunciation of the right to dogmatic assertions (A768/B796).

As opposed to this *heteronomous* restraint, critical philosophy ought to employ an *autonomous* one. *A priori* reason should be able to check its own speculative impulses. The skeptical method, accordingly, ought to submit particular *a priori* judgments, which constitute metaphysical *dogmata,* to a sort of internal test. In order to do this, Kant turns his eyes toward a different kind of skepticism—the dialectical method of the ancient skeptics.[8]

2.1. *Kant's "Predilection" for Pyrrhonian Skepticism*

In his definition of a skeptical objection, Kant describes the main traits of the ancient skeptical method:

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[7] Heteronomy of the will results when the will acts in accordance with a practical law given to it by an empirical object (of desire) and not by itself. This is the case of hypothetical imperatives, where the will obeys the empirical conditions that the object requires for its achievement: "If the will seeks the law that is to determine it *anywhere else* than in the fitness of its maxims for its own making of universal law—if therefore in going beyond itself it seeks this law in the character of any of its objects—the result is always *heteronomy*" (*GW, 4: 441).*

[8] Kant's criticism of Hume in this respect is not completely fair. When Kant refers to Hume's method as an empirical "censorship," he is only taking into account Hume's argument on causality. But Hume's skepticism is broader, and he uses also the opposition of *a priori* claims in order to undermine speculative claims. In fact, Kant himself agrees with Hume's Academic stance, as I will argue in section 2.2 of this chapter, pp. 97-103.

> The skeptical objection puts the proposition and its opposite over against one another, as objections of equal weight, each alternatively a dogma with the other as an objection to it; ... in order to annihilate entirely every judgment about the object (A389).

The dialectical test of opposing pro and con arguments to *dogmata* and the resulting suspension of judgment are the most important features of the ancient skeptical method. But, to what sort of ancient skepticism—Pyrrhonian or to Academic—is Kant referring?

From his *Logic* it is clear that Kant was acquainted with both: "The skeptics can be divided into Pyrrhonists and Academics, the latter of whom pursued it furthest" (*Dohna-Wundlacken Logic*, 719). The difference between them, according to Kant, is that the Academics were "dogmatic skeptics" whereas the Pyrrhonists had a milder position:

> The academic doubter proved and demonstrated per definitionem that nothing could be properly proved, nothing defined, which was however, a contradictio in *adjecto*, and this was dogmatic, seeming doubt. The Pyrrhonic, i.e. skeptical doubter, says, on the other hand, that to each and every one of our judgments, or at least to most, another judgment may always be opposed which maintains exactly the opposite of what is contained in the former judgment... *(Blomberg Logic,* 209).

In this paragraph, Kant seems to be defining Academic skepticism in terms of the Middle Academy of Arcesilaus.[9] Most probably, Kant retrieved this claim from Sextus Empiricus' description of Academic skepticism as dogmatic. As I discussed in the previous chapter,[10] Sextus presents Academic skepticism *in general* as holding the position that nothing can be known, whereas he describes Pyrrhonism as continuing the search.[11] This way of describing Pyrrhonism also appears in Diogenes Laertius' account of Pyrrho's life,[12] which Kant cites as a source in his

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[9] For Kant's description of Academic skepticism as dogmatic, see also *LL,* Blomberg Logic, 216; Vienna Logic, 886; Dohna-Wundlacken Logic, 744, where he calls this form of skepticism "universal skepticism"; and Jäsche Logic, 30.

[10] See Chapter II, p. 73.

[11] Sextus Empiricus, *Outlines of Pyrrhonism*, Book I, 1-4.

[12] "All these were called Pyrrhonians after the name of their master, ... Zetetics or seekers because they were ever seeking truth, Sceptics or inquirers because they were always looking for a solution and never finding one, Ephectics

Logic.[13] Although Sextus drew a more nuanced description of Academic skepticism in further sections of his *Outlines*,[14] he does intimate in the first section of the treatise that any form of skepticism other than Pyrrhonian is dogmatic.

Kant is right to affirm that Arcesilaus' skepticism was dogmatic. In this respect, his criticism of Academic skepticism coincides with Lucullus' line of argument in *Academica* when reporting Antiochus' objections to the Middle and New Academy (as represented by Arcesilaus and Carneades). In Lucullus view' (again, that of Antiochus), the skepticism of the Academy is dogmatic since the affirmation that everything is uncertain is (or ought to be) a "grasped truth," namely, a *dogma*: "... your school should say that the wise man has perceived at least the mere fact that nothing can be perceived" *(A* II, 28). Kant agrees with this characterization, which, however, is only correct about the skepticism of Arcesilaus' Academy. Kant does not distinguish the dogmatic skepticism of Arcesilaus from the milder fallibilism of Carneades, but rather considers that Academic skepticism, as a whole, provides the best representation of skepticism as: "... the prejudice of accepting all cognition in general as uncertain" (*Dohna-Wundlacken Logic,* 744).

Now, Kant's characterization of Pyrrhonism is rather puzzling. He understands Pyrrhonian suspension of judgment as merely provisional and overlooks the important role that Pyrrhonism assigns to *epochê,* in order to conduct the mind to a more definitive state of *ataraxia* or peacefulness. As a matter of fact, Arcesilaus' skepticism has been associated with Pyrrhonism in

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or doubters because of the state of mind which followed their inquiry, I mean suspense of judgment, and finally Aporetics or those in perplexity..." Diogenes Laertius, *Lives of Eminent Philosophers*, IX, 69-71.

[13] "We actually have no writings remaining from Pyrrho himself, except that Diogenes Laertius puts forth something from them" (*Blomberg Logic,* 214).

[14] That is, in *Outlines of Pyrrhonism,* Book I. 220-235, where he explains the doctrines of Arcesilaus and Carneades.

this very aspect. Their accounts of the *epochê* are so similar that, at some point, in the *Outlines*, Sextus Empiricus identifies both forms of skepticism:

> Arcesilaus, however, who was, as we said, the president or founder of the Middle Academy, seems to have shared the doctrines of Pyrrho, so that his way of thought is almost identical with ours. For we do not find him making any assertion about the reality or unreality of anything, nor does he prefer any one thing to another in point of probability or improbability, but suspends judgment about all. He also says that the End is suspension—which is accompanied, as we have said, by quietude.[15]

It appears, thus, that Kant was not aware of this essential condition of Pyrrhonism. His preference for Pyrrhonism over Academic skepticism seems to be founded on a misrepresentation of the latter. For, in fact, when Kant speaks about the idea of a *suspension of judgment* in the *Logic,* his description is much more akin to Carneades' view than to Arcesilaus' or Pyrrho's. Kant says:

> In *suspensio judicii* there lies some freedom. One can also give his approval and, yet, in judging, not make a decision—which still awaits further grounds—where one accepts the opposite as still possible. I am free when I accept a proposition in a practical respect for the good that can follow from it. One can say, then, that there are things in matters of religion, e.g., our eternal continued existence, which we accept just for this good, for this life is not at all adequate to the idea of the highest good (*Dohna-Wundlacken Logic*, 736).

As I argued in the previous chapter, Cicero discusses in *Academica* the difference between "approval" and "assent." [16] Assent has a theoretical character, whereas approval has only a practical one. Thus, in the Ciceronian (or Carneadean) picture, the sage may give his approval to presentations, whenever it is *practically* advisable. In the above-cited passage, Kant is undoubtedly referring to this difference. Suspension of judgment does not preclude *approval* (a practical holding-to-be-true) but only *assent* (a theoretical holding-to-be-true).

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[15] Sextus Empiricus, *Outlines of Pyrrhonism*, Book I. 232.

[16] Chapter II, pp. 67-68.

Yet, someone could claim, and not without reason, that Pyrrhonism does not deny a form of assent or approval to propositions. Sextus Empiricus says that this skeptic does not:

> ...overthrow the affective sense impressions which induce our assent involuntarily, and these impressions are "the appearances." And when we question whether the underlying object is such as it appears, we grant the fact that it appears, and our doubt does not concern the appearance itself but the account given of that appearance – and that is a different thing from questioning the appearance itself. For example, honey appears to us to be sweet (and this we grant, for we perceive sweetness through the senses), but whether it is also sweet in its essence is for us a matter of doubt, since this is not an appearance but a judgment regarding the appearance.[17]

Because of its striking similarity, it seems as though Kant's distinction between the *phenomenal* and the *noumenal* may have found its inspiration in this passage of Sextus Empiricus. In fact, G. Tonelli has suggested that Kant may have taken the term "noumenon" from the tradition of Pyrrhonian skepticism, as accounted by Baumgarten in his *Philosophia Generalis*.[18] However, the similarity ought to be restricted to terminology, since Kant's understanding of appearances is much broader than Sextus'. In this respect, R. Makkreel affirms:

> Kant seems to make an initial concession to the skeptics when he allows that we are conscious of appearances, not of things in themselves. But for Kant our consciousness of appearances places us in a position to also *know them objectively*.[19]

Kantian appearances are not merely mental representations or sense impressions, but they also involve the possibility of objective agreement. As a result, Sextus' version of suspension of belief, whereby we withhold any claim about the objective world and simply act according to subjective—indeed, private—judgments, cannot be the sort of suspension that Kant commends in the *Logic*. When Kant refers to a *suspensio judicii,* whereby we can still approve some judgments

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[17] Sextus Empiricus, *Outlines of Pyrrhonism,* Book I. 19-20.

[18] G. Tonelli, "Kant and the Ancient Skeptics," in *Skepticism in the Enlightenment*, Richard Popkin ed. (Netherlands: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1997), 73. According to Tonelli, Kant never read Sextus Empiricus directly.

[19] R. Makkreel, "Kant's Responses to Skepticism," 101 (my emphasis).

in view of their practical advisability, he cannot be talking about Pyrrhonian *epochê*, but rather he must be referring to Carneadean or Ciceronian suspension of judgment.

Moreover, Kant's example in the passage cited above involves a proposition concerning more than simple sense impressions. Kant affirms that we can give our practical approval to the proposition "the soul is immortal" in view of our understanding of the highest good and this life's inadequacy to reach it. Sextus would never claim that we are allowed to freely give our assent or approval to such a proposition. According to him, we should rather suspend any belief concerning it and guide our life on more basic propositions, namely, those having to do with subjective impressions (hunger, cold, etc.). If a Pyrrhonist ever maintained the immortality of the soul, it would be only in order to follow the customs of the community—as, for instance, when attending funeral rites—and in this way to avoid a disturbing motive from entering her soul. Sextus' resolves in this way the skeptical problem of *apraxia*:

> Adhering, then, to appearances, *we live in accordance with the normal rules of life*, undogmatically, seeing that we cannot remain wholly inactive. And it would seem that this regulation of life is fourfold, and that one part lies in the guidance of Nature, another in the constraint of the passions, *another in the tradition of laws and customs*, another in the instruction of the arts. [20]

But Kant's example can in no way be referring to a case like this. According to Kant, to positively assert the immortality of the soul, even if only for practical matters, involves an act of individual freedom, whereas the mild attitude of the Pyrrhonist towards the customs of society represents rather a heteronomous choice.

To further clarify his own example, Kant notes that there are two possible attitudes involved in the suspension of judgments. One is characteristic of strong minds, the other of weak minds:

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[20] Sextus Empiricus, *Outlines of Pyrrhonism,* Book I. 23-24 (my emphasis).

> *Suspensio judicii* consists in this, that when all the grounds on both sides are equally insufficient, none is predominant. It can be (1) *ob indifferentiam*, or (2) *ob aequilibrium*. To hold oneself in *suspensio judicii* by choice (this is the mean between holding to be true and rejecting—it remains only a problematic judgment) shows a very great mind and is extremely hard on account of the fact that the inclination toward immediate judgment of the understanding interferes. *Ob aequilibrium*, to be and to remain inconclusive, gives evidence of weak minds (*Dohna-Wundlacken Logic,* 736).

The first attitude, *ob indifferentiam*, corresponds to New Academic fallibilism. The second, *ob aequilibrium*, corresponds to Pyrrhonism or to Arcesilaus' Middle Academic skepticism. In the former, the judgment is theoretically suspended, i.e., considered as merely problematic. However, it may still be *approved,* i.e., adopted as a belief for practical matters. In the latter, given the impossibility to decide on mere theoretical grounds, no judgment is adopted and no opinion formed.[21]

Let us observe the contrast more closely. The first attitude is usually ill considered. When someone claims to believe something that nonetheless (on a different level) she still doubts, people usually regard her as being inconsistent. If I say, for example, that I believe in God, and so I obey what I take His commandments to be, but that I still acknowledge the possibility that there be no God in reality, my interlocutors may very well object that, in fact, I *do not* believe in God. "What you are talking about is not a *belief,*" they would say. "Perhaps, it is an *opinion*, but not a *belief*." Moreover, they would not understand why I bother to obey the rules of a certain religion, when the fundamental belief in the existence of God is, as it were, "lacking" in me.[22]

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[21]In the *Vienna Logic*, Kant refers again to these two forms of *suspensio judicii* with a new terminology: "we can divide this withheld approval in two: *suspensio judicii indagatoria*, is when one still intends to seek out the grounds for the determinate judgment...; or *renunciation judicii*, in that we renounce our judgment and give up all hope of determining anything" (*Vienna Logic*, 860).

[22] I will return to this discussion in Chapter V and Final Remarks.

But it is precisely this attitude that Kant praises as a free mode of thinking. For it requires deep intellectual honesty as well as practical determination to recognize that, although one can never claim theoretical certainty about a proposition, it may be practically advisable or even necessary to hold it. The skeptical or Pyrrhonian option is easier: to give up individual practical beliefs because of their theoretical uncertainty and to let others decide how one should conduct one's life in practical matters—i.e., to blindly follow the customs of one's social group.

It is possible that Kant's knowledge of Sextus, coming from secondary sources (as Tonelli holds), is incomplete. In any case it is clear that, had Kant been familiar with the Pyrrhonian doctrine of *ataraxia,* he would not have approved it. This doctrine endorses an indifferent way of yielding to private sensory impressions while withholding beliefs, which in Kant's view would be completely incongruent with autonomy.

The sort of suspension of judgment that Kant finds valuable is that which furthers inquiry and brings it closer to certainty. Kant has been explicit in saying that the skeptical method, in its critical application, also:

> ... *aims at certainty,* seeking to discover the point of misunderstanding in disputes that are honestly intended and conducted with intelligence by both sides, in order to do as wise legislators do when from the embarrassment of judges in cases of litigation, they draw instruction concerning that which is defective and imprecisely determined in their laws (A424-B452, my emphasis).

In this passage, Kant offers an explanation of the legitimate use of the skeptical method in judicial terms. The aim of the skeptical method is to determine practically that which, however, cannot be theoretically proven—as judges do in law-courts. In the *Logic*, Kant describes the skeptic as:

> ... a judge who weights the grounds for something as well as against it, and who listens to the plaintiff as well as the defendant, prior to and before deciding the matter and passing judgment (*Blomberg Logic*, 210).

As a judge, the skeptic must ultimately pronounce himself in a definitive way, that is, he must at some point give up the *epochê*. However, his final declaration is more a practical imperative—i.e., that such and such ought to be done—than a theoretical assertion. To be sure, the judge resolves the case—he affirms the culpability or the innocence of the prosecuted—but his assertion is always more directed towards practical concerns than towards theoretical certainty.

In a beautiful footnote concerning freedom in the "Doctrine of the Elements," Kant tells us that in moral issues no one can "judge with complete justice" (A551/B579); in other words, no one can be acquainted with the actual motives of someone else's actions. No one can know with certainty whether someone else acted morally (i.e., out of respect for the moral law) or immorally (i.e., out of inclination and against the moral law) in a particular case. However, the judge must pass judgment on the matter without hesitation. In this sense, he really resembles the fallibilist who, renouncing theoretical certainty, nonetheless *approves* a belief out of practical necessity.

2.2. *Hume's Academic Skepticism and Kant's Empiricist Phase*

How can we explain that even though Kant speaks of Pyrrhonism as the main source of the skeptical method, his description of the latter is, however, more in agreement with Academic fallibilism? A possible hypothesis is that Kant, in spite of his critique of Humean skepticism, in fact was positively influenced by Hume's adaptation of Academic fallibilism. In other words, although Kant asserts to be following Pyrrhonism, he is enacting the Humean version of Academic fallibilism.

Hume's relationship with the Academic fallibilism of Cicero, although straightforwardly expressed, has been somehow obscured by traditional scholarship. Hume has been usually identified as a modern Pyrrhonist, when in fact throughout his works he shows himself

consistently critical of this kind of skepticism.[23] In the *Inquiry Concerning Human Understanding,* Hume condemns a skepticism that, in recommending a complete suspension of belief, settles for traditional guidelines to action and forsakes all philosophical investigation. This sort of skepticism he calls "extreme" and identifies with Pyrrhonism.

Pyrrhonism, with its goal of complete *epochê* or suspension of belief, is for Hume contrary to human nature and practical life. No human being can suspend belief consistently throughout his life because nature demands that beliefs be adopted, even if only provisionally, in order to act. Thus, Pyrrhonism is either not a serious doctrine or a doctrine that aims at undermining social life:

> … A Pyrrhonian cannot expect that his philosophy will have any constant influence on the mind. Or, if it had, that this influence would be beneficial to society. On the contrary, he must acknowledge … that all human life must perish were his principles universally and steadily to prevail. All discourse, all action, would immediately cease, and men remain in a total lethargy, till the necessities of nature, unsatisfied, put an end to their miserable existence.[24]

In the *Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion,* Hume's criticism of Pyrrhonism is expressed still more forcefully. He writes:

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[23] One of the most important landmarks of this interpretation is Richard Popkin's article "David Hume: His Pyrrhonism and his Critique of Pyrrhonism" *The Philosophical Quarterly* 1. 5 (1951): 385-407. Popkin's thesis is that "Hume himself actually maintained the only 'consistent' Pyrrhonian point of view" (p. 385). Ever since this article was published, contemporary scholars have tried to accommodate Hume's skepticism to the tenets of Pyrrhonism. See, for example, Philip Stanley, "The Scepticism of David Hume" *The Journal of Philosophy* 32. 16 (1935): 421-431. Stanley argues: "Much of Hume's own thinking is avowedly Pyrrhonian…" (p. 422). A more interesting position is held by Thomas Olshewsky in "The Classical Roots of Hume's Skepticism." After being unsuccessful in trying to find a Pyrrhonian motive in Hume's skeptical position, Olshewsky arrives at the conclusion that the "historical home" of Hume's skepticism is "Academic in character, which he learned neither from Bayle nor from Sextus but from Cicero." Thomas Olshewsky, "The Classical Roots of Hume's Skepticism" *Journal of the History of Ideas* 52. 2 (1991): 278.

[24] D. Hume, *An Inquiry Concerning Human Understanding* (Indianapolis-Cambridge: Hackett Publishing Company, 1993), 110.

> … upon the whole, nothing could be more ridiculous than the principles of ancient Pyrrhonians, if in reality they endeavoured, as is pretended, to extend throughout the same skepticism which they had learned from the declamations of their school, and which they ought to have confined to them.[25]

In contrast to this, Hume describes Academic skepticism as valuable critical doctrine. Academic philosophy is for Hume a "mitigated" form of skepticism, which corrects the errors of Pyrrhonism, while preserving its critical spirit:

> There is indeed, a more mitigated skepticism or academical philosophy, which may be both durable and useful, and which may, in part, be the result of this Pyrrhonism or excessive scepticism, when its undistinguished doubts are, in some measure, corrected by common sense and reflection.[26]

Hume's comments on Academic skepticism are few, but always laudatory. He tells us that Academic philosophy is contrary to rashness of thought and superstition, but it does not preclude practical and theoretical inquiry:

> Nor need we fear that this philosophy, while it endeavours to limit our enquiries to common life, should ever undermine the reasonings of common life and carry its doubts so far as to destroy all action, as well as speculation.[27]

Academic skepticism is led by a genuine "love of truth" and feels deep contempt for dogmatism's "indolence of mind." For these reasons, Hume affirms, it has been unjustly derided as "libertine, profane and irreligious."[28]

Why is Hume so fond of this form of skepticism? Because it helps to establish the limits of reason, without denying the possibility of knowledge:

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[25] D. Hume, *Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion* (Oxford-New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), 35.

[26] D. Hume, *An Inquiry*, 111.

[27] Ibid, 27.

[28] Ibid.

> The declared profession of every reasonable skeptic is only to reject *abstruse, remote and refined arguments;* to adhere to common sense and the plain instincts of nature, and to assent wherever every reason strike him with so full a force, that he cannot, without the greatest violence, prevent it.[29]

Academic skepticism or fallibilism, in Hume's view, attacks only "abstruse, remote and refined arguments"; in other words, it becomes a form of "speculative skepticism." It is directed mainly against metaphysical claims, leaving natural science and practical deliberation unharmed. It is, thus, properly understood as skepticism with respect to the claims of reason, but not to the claims of experience.

The *Dialogues of Natural Religion* constitutes the best example of how Hume's adaptation of Academic skepticism into speculative skepticism functions. This piece is clearly indebted to Cicero's philosophical works.[30] Not only is Hume's use of Cicero's dialogical genre a mark of his commitment to Academic skepticism, but the names of the main characters of the dialogue betray the points of view on religion of the Hellenistic schools that Cicero used to depict in his own dialogues: the name of Cleanthes is taken from Cleanthes of Assos, the second head of the Stoa, and represents the view of Stoic rational theism, and the name of Philo is taken from the Academic Philo of Larissa, Cicero's mentor, and evidently represents the point of view of Academic or, for Hume, speculative skepticism.[31]

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[29] D. Hume, *Dialogues*, 56 (my emphasis).

[30] Specifically to Cicero's *De Natura Deorum*, as has been argued by Kemp Smith, among others. See N. Kemp Smith, *Hume's Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion* (New York: Library of Liberal Arts, 1948); E. C. Mossner, "The Enigma of Hume" *Mind* XLV (1936): 334-349; and J. V. Price, "Sceptics in Cicero and Hume" *Journal of the History of Ideas* 25. 1 (1964): 97-106.

[31] There is a third character, not as important as the latter two, named Demea. He represents the view of an orthodox believer who sympathizes with skeptical fideism. The name may have been taken from one of Plautus' comedies.

It has been said that these dialogues, just as the rest of Hume's skeptical arguments, have a Pyrrhonian inspiration. Following this view, some interpreters align Hume's own ideas with Cleanthes and consider Philo as representing the Pyrrhonian view. This interpretation is, once again, mistaken. Just as in Cicero's dialogues the "real" Ciceronian view is difficult to grasp (precisely because Cicero intends to convey the plausibility of each point of view expressed in his dialogues), just in this way, Hume's own view concerning religion in his *Dialogues* is neither completely skeptical (i.e., Pyrrhonian) nor theistic. Rather, Hume wants to convey a critical assessment to the arguments on the existence of God without neglecting the fact that such arguments may have some theoretical plausibility and practical utility.

Now, how is this Humean adaptation of Academic fallibilism reflected in Kant's thought? As we have seen from the *Logic,* even though Kant also tends to conflate Pyrrhonian skepticism with Academic skepticism, when he adopts a skeptical stance he tends to reproduce the aspects of skepticism that are decidedly Academic or fallibilist. In my view, this is because Kant's interpretation of ancient skepticism is influenced by Hume's Academic "speculative" skepticism.

In *"L'evolution philosophique de Kant,"* Lewis Robinson argues that between 1760 and 1770 Kant had a phase that can be called "empiricist-skeptical." In this phase, Hume's influence on Kant is first manifested. Although Robinson identifies this influence with the acknowledgment of an irrational element in the concept of causality—Robinson restricts Hume's skeptical influence on Kant to this specific problem—we can argue that Kant's empiricist-skeptical phase shows already many other features of Hume's Academic skepticism.[32] In one of Kant's most controversial writings of this period, *The Dreams of a Spirit Seer* (1766), we can find a few indications that Kant was beginning to adopt Hume's position concerning metaphysical claims.

[32] As we will see in Chapter IV, section 1.1., pp. 108-112, Hume's speculative skepticism also influenced Kant's conception of the "Antinomies of Pure Reason."

This interesting treatise, which had the bad luck of being harshly criticized by Mendelssohn,[33] intends to show the two positions at stake in the question about the immortality of the soul. Kant examines the theoretical plausibility of the claim that the soul is immortal and concludes that, even though theoretically speaking the claim has insufficient grounds, practically speaking it enjoys a justified popularity. Kant writes:

> The scale of reason, after all, is not quite impartial and one of its arms, bearing the inscription "Hope of the Future" has a constructive advantage, causing even those light reasons which fall into its scale to outweigh the speculations of greater weight on the other side. This is the only inaccuracy [of the scale of reason] which I cannot easily remove, and which, in fact, I never want to remove.[34]

Two main aspects of this passage are interesting. The first is Kant's use of the metaphor of the scale—a metaphor that is already a common *locus* of Academic skepticism.[35] It is intended to show how, contrary to the presuppositions of the Pyrrhonians, a careful examination of opposite claims always leads to a particular inclination of reason. As cited above, this position is also stated in Hume's *Dialogues* when he says that the attitude of the "reasonable skeptic" is "to assent, wherever any reasons strike him with so full a force, that he cannot, without the greatest violence, prevent it."[36] Kant must have had in mind either Cicero or Hume (perhaps both) when he wrote this passage.

Secondly, from the passage above, it is important to notice the fact that Kant expresses his view about the immortality of the soul with absolute assuredness. His opinion about the natural "advantage" of this claim over its opposite does not undergo important modifications in his critical period. If following Robinson's suggestion, we consider the Kant of the *Dreams* as

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[33] Letter to Mendelssohn (April 8, 1766) in Kant, *Correspondence*, 10:69-73.

[34] Kant, *Dreams of a Spirit-Seer* (London-New York: Swan Sonnenschein, 1900), 86.

[35] Chapter II, note 28, p. 58.

[36] Note 29, p. 92.

"empiricist-skeptic," his stance about the immortality of soul here is as skeptical as we could expect from Kant. However, there is no trace of Pyrrhonism in this early view, nor in his *Logic* and his subsequent works. Therefore, to consider that Kant's skeptical method in the first *Critique* is Pyrrhonian amounts to overlook Kant's commitments in his earlier, more skeptical phase.

3. **Dialectic as Both a Logic of Illusion and a Skeptical Therapy**

But before we observe how Kant's skeptical exercise in the "Dialectic of Pure Reason" (more specifically in the antinomies) resembles that of the fallibilist, it is important to examine Kant's definition of the term "dialectic." It involves two senses of the word—one negative and the other positive. The first refers to reason's natural tendency to think metaphysically. Kant describes this dialectic as a "logic of illusion" (A61-B86, A293-B350). He claims that this tendency of reason is unavoidable and can never be completely deterred (A297/B354):

> Hence there is a natural and unavoidable dialectic of pure reason, not one in which a bungler might be entangled through lack of acquaintance, or one that some sophists has artfully invented in order to confuse rational people, but one that irremediably attaches to human reason, so that even after we have exposed the mirage, it will still not cease to lead our reason on with false hopes, continually propelling it into momentary aberrations that always need to be removed (A298/B355).

The illusions involved in this dialectical activity of reason are very peculiar. They are neither "empirical illusions" nor "logical illusions." Empirical illusions occur when "the faculty of judgment is misled by the influence of the imagination" (B352), as for example, when the thirsty man sees water in a desert. On the other hand, logical illusions "arise solely from a failure of attentiveness to the logical rule" (A297). As a result, once the erroneous step in the inference has been corrected, the illusion completely vanishes. But dialectical illusion or, also in Kant's terms,

"transcendental illusion," never disappears completely. It can be unveiled but it will never cease to reproduce itself. This illusion consists in applying the categories of the understanding to issues that go beyond the realm of experience. As a consequence, these illusions "hold out to us the semblance of extending the *pure understanding*" (B352, Kant's emphasis). Claims such as "the world is infinitely extensive" or "there is a necessary being as cause of the world" are examples of it.

The second meaning of "dialectic" is the corrective method derived from the skeptical tradition that helps to unmask, although only temporarily, the above-mentioned illusions. This sort of dialectic is called by Kant "transcendental dialectic":

> The transcendental dialectic will therefore content itself with uncovering the illusion in transcendental judgments, while at the same time protecting us form being deceived by it, but it can never bring it about that that transcendental illusion should even disappear and cease to be an illusion (A298).

Transcendental dialectic is a derivation of natural dialectic. For, to any illusion of reason there may be an opposed one, which claims equal validity. Since the principles of the understanding, in metaphysical questions, do not have the intuitive, experiential content that gives them their ground of truth, it is easy to find a contrary, but still logically valid, dialectical claim. As a result, dialectic can be therapeutically applied[37] in the fashion of the ancient skeptics:

> The second part of the transcendental logic must therefore be a critique of this dialectical illusion, and is called transcendental dialectic, not as an art of dogmatically arousing such illusions (an unfortunately highly prevalent art among the manifold works of metaphysical jugglery), but rather as a critique ... in order to uncover the false illusions of their groundless pretensions... (A64-B88).

In the next chapter I will examine in detail how this twofold meaning of dialectic develops in Kant's "Antinomy of Pure Reason." For the time being, however, I would like to refer to

[37] Graham Bird has pointed to this aspect of the "Dialectic," linking it to Wittgenstein's early therapy in the *Tractatus*. See G. Bird, *The Revolutionary Kant* (Chicago: Open Court, 2006), 589-623.

another passage of the *Critique,* in which Kant uses the same dialectical or skeptical strategy to unveil the illusions that philosophers have produced in their attempts to resolve a long-standing discussion. I believe that this passage shows clearly Kant's acquaintance with Cicero's *Academica*, since it deals precisely with the impossibility of finding a general criterion of truth in the fashion of the Stoics.[38]

Kant begins by positing once again the main question of logic: "What is truth?" He says that there are two possible answers to this question. The first is to give a definition of the concept of truth, namely, "the agreement of cognition with its object." The second, a more difficult but also more important answer, is to give a *criterion* of truth. In other words, the question here is not *what truth means* but *how can we know* that a particular proposition is true. Kant considers that it is essential to know which of these questions has been asked, lest we act as "presenting the ridiculous sight of one person milking a billy goat while the other holds a sieve underneath" (A58-B83). That is, not only would we be looking for an answer in the wrong place, but also, we would not be able to catch it in the event that it were provided (a very ungraceful metaphor, indeed).

Next comes a very difficult argument concerning the impossibility of finding any *material* criterion of truth. This part of the argument is an interesting refutation of the Stoic criterion of *catalêpsis*. Recapitulating, the Stoics believed that some presentations were so "evident" or "perspicuous" that we could not doubt that they corresponded to the object they represented. Such presentations, hence, had a "mark" of their truthfulness, and this mark was considered by them as a sufficient criterion of truth.

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[38] The passage corresponds to sections III and IV of the "Introduction" to the "Transcendental Dialectic" (A58-B82 to A64-B88).

Kant affirms that, in order to determine that a particular cognition corresponds to a particular object, say *x*, we would need to know not only that the cognition agrees with *x*, but also that it disagrees with *y* and *z*. And in order to do that, we would need to have a *rule* that, once applied to all cases, would show the agreement in one case and the disagreement in the other. But this rule would have to be external to any particular cognition, that is, the rule ought to be *formal*:

> If truth consists in the agreement of a cognition with its object, then this object must thereby be distinguished from others; for a cognition is false if it does not agree with the object to which it is related even if it contains something that could well be valid for other objects. Now a general criterion of truth would be that which was valid for all cognitions without any distinction among their objects. But it is clear that since with such criterion one abstracts from all content of cognition (relation to its object), yet truth concerns precisely this content, it would be completely impossible and absurd to ask for *a mark* of the truth of this content of cognition..." (A59-B83).

In other words, Kant's answers to the Stoics on their doctrine of *catalêpsis* by arguing that a criterion of truth as *a mark of some* cognitions (which are indubitably true) cannot itself become a rule for *all* cognitions because this mark belongs to the *content* of the cognition, and thus, it lacks the generality of any applicable rule.

Since there is no possible material criterion of truth, we can turn to logic in order to try to find there a purely *formal* criterion. Metaphysicians of all times have relied on such criterion. But, Kant argues, logic provides only a *necessary* criterion and not a *sufficient* one. For logic can only tell us that a judgment that is not self-contradictory is not formally false, but this does not entail that it is objectively true. Rather it may be true or false depending on the relationship of its cognition with the corresponding object. Hence, after this sort of preliminary logical test, we still need to establish the judgment's cognitive agreement with the object:

> The merely logical criterion of truth, namely, the agreement of a cognition with the general and formal laws of the understanding and reason, is therefore certainly the condition *sine qua non*, and

> the negative condition of all truth; further, however, logic cannot go, and the error that concerns not form but content cannot be discovered by any touchstone of logic (A60-B85).

This argument is a good example of the therapeutic/transcendental use of dialectic. In a nutshell, Kant affirms that in order for a criterion of truth to be applicable, it needs to be external to cognition. But a material criterion, one that is to be found in the very content of the cognition, is not external. Hence, the criterion cannot be material. However, if it is purely formal, i.e., logical, it does not provide a real touchstone of truth because it fails to evaluate the relation between the judgment and its object, wherein its truthfulness lies. Thus, there cannot be a purely formal criterion either. Kant's argument has the form of an antinomy. The first thesis, "there is no possible *material* criterion of truth," leads to affirming what will be, in turn, refuted in the antithesis: "that there is no possible *formal* criterion of truth." For the skeptic, this should be enough to suspend judgment about certainty. For Kant, however, it is not.[39]

Kant's solution to the dispute on the criterion of truth is very interesting. He applies the dialectical-skeptical method to show the futility of the issue. He considers that the refuting arguments that go back and forth in *Academica* between Stoics and Academics are dialectical in the negative way—just fallacious arguments that point to the natural illusion of reason. Kant uncovers this illusion by showing the undecidability of the problem as it stands and pointing to a different way of positing it. We may, after all, grant Kant his right to use the distasteful metaphor of the he-goat and the sieve holder. With his argument he points to both the cow and the bucket and makes the skeptic and the Stoic do some real work.

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[39] Such a touchstone is to be provided by "Transcendental Logic." Whether Kant succeeds in this enterprise is a very important question that, however, escapes the present investigation.

3.1. *Francis Bacon and the Origin of Kant's Dialectic*

Kant's choice of the term "dialectic" to denominate the second part of his *Critique of Pure Reason* seems not to have been straightforward or unreflective. Kemp Smith reminds us of Kant's vacillation concerning the proper way to organize his work, as it can be read in the *Reflections*. Kemp Smith claims that Kant's initial structure of the critique contained four divisions: "Aesthetic," "Logic," "Critique" and "Architectonic," and that the division called "Critique" corresponded in that preliminary plan to what in the final version of the work is entitled "Dialectic."[40] He further informs us that the terms "Analytic" and "Dialectic" do not even appear in the *Reflections*, and, relying on Adickes, he asserts that there is no trace of such terms in the popular handbooks of logics and metaphysics of the eighteenth century:

> Kant professes to be following his contemporaries in thus using the term as a title for the treatment of false reasoning. Adickes, after examination of a large number of eighteenth century textbooks, reports that in the six passages in which alone he has found it to occur, it is never so employed. In Meier, it is used as a title for the theory of probable reasoning, and in Baumgarten, it occurs only in adjectival form as equivalent to sophistical. This last is the nearest approach to Kant's definition. *All historical considerations may therefore be swept aside.*[41]

Historical considerations, in my view, are still relevant despite what Kemp Smith thinks. They just need to be taken further—not only to Kant's immediate predecessors, but also to those who tried to establish a solid foundation for the sciences in previous centuries.

Kant gives us an important clue as to where should we go looking for this "historical consideration." In the presentation of the second edition of the *Critique,* he introduces a motto taken from the Preface of Francis Bacon's *Great Instauration.* The motto advises us to take this

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[40] "To his teaching as a whole he usually applies the title *Transcendental Philosophy*, and in *Reflexion* ii, 123, he enumerates the following subdivisions within it: *Aesthetic, Logic, Critique* and *Architectonic.* By *Critique*, Kant must here mean what in other *Reflexionen* he names *Discipline*, and which he finally named *Dialectic.*" N. Kemp Smith, *A Commentary to Kant's Critique of Pure Reason* (New York: Humanities Press, 1950), 438.

[41] N. Kemp Smith, *A Commentary to Kant's Critique of Pure Reason*, 441 (my emphasis).

work not just as an "opinion" but as the "foundation of human utility and dignity," and it assures us that the "legitimate end" of the work is not so much the augmentation of knowledge as the guarantee of having attained an "end of infinite errors" (Bii).

Kant's acknowledgment of Bacon's enterprise is a good indication of his deep admiration for the philosopher of Verulam. Therefore, we should not take as a mere coincidence that, in the *Advancement of Learning*, Bacon establishes a twofold division of logic—with an "analytic" and a "dialectic."

In this work, Bacon develops what he believes ought to be the general system and doctrine of the sciences. Once he arrives at the treatment of the "art of judgment"—that is, the way in which scientific doctrines ought to be elaborated and presented—Bacon affirms that this art has two methods:

> ... the one *by way of direction*, the other *by way of caution*; the former... is that part of logic which is comprehended in the Analytics. The second method of doctrine, was introduced for expedite use and assurance sake; discovering the more subtile forms of sophisms and illaqueations with their redargutions, which is that which is termed *elenchus*.[42]

According to Bacon, the application of analytical (logical) principles serves to direct judgment in its inferences, while the application of dialectical principles helps to prevent judgment from falling into fallacies or sophistical illusions. Dialectic corrects judgment by discovering the subtle sophisms towards which reason tends to stray while judging. Bacon uses here the Socratic term *elenchus* to refer to dialectic. This term conveys better the relation between dialectic and the skeptical method as instituted by Socrates and followed by the Platonic Academy. But curiously, when Bacon refers to the Socratic *elenchus* he does not consider it as a skeptical procedure. He does acknowledge the traditional link between *elenchus* and skepticism, but he considers that the skepticism of Socrates and the Academy was only a matter of irony:

[42] F. Bacon, *The Advancement of Learning* (New York: Modern Library, 2001), 125.

> It is true that in Socrates it [skepticism] was supposed to be but a form of irony... for he used to disable his knowledge to the end to enhance his knowledge, ... and in the later Academy, which Cicero embraced, this opinion also of *acatalépsia*, (I doubt) was not held sincerely: for all those which excelled in copie of speech seem to have chosen the sect, as that which was fittest to give glory to their eloquence and variable discourses, being rather like progresses of pleasure than journeys to an end. [43]

Bacon does not believe in the sincerity of Socrates or Cicero's skepticism. Furthermore, his linking dialectic with Aristotle's and Plato's methods[44] indicates that he considers it rather as a positive—albeit corrective—method, which helps in the direction of inquiry to truth. But in any case, he has taken the idea of a corrective procedure of reason, called dialectic, from the skeptical tradition of the Academy.

Kant's reasons for giving the second part of his *Critique* the title "Transcendental Dialectic" may include both his knowledge of ancient sources and his familiarity with Bacon's characterization of the dialectical method. Following the ancients, Kant gave to the skeptical method the new formulation of logical antinomies and, under the influence of Bacon, he decided to give a twofold division to his work: the "Analytic" and "Dialectic of Pure Reason."

This historical issue brings us to the question of how Kant's architectonic choices affected the "Dialectic." As has been explained by Paul Guyer and Allen W. Wood, Kant's initial conception of a "Dialectic of Pure Reason" (before 1777) involved only the sections on the antinomies. It was, thus, primarily inspired on the skeptical method that the antinomies portray:

> It looks as if by 1777 Kant had come this far in planning the *Critique*: ... [it] would basically have consisted of a theory of sensibility, a theory of experience, and an antinomy of pure reason. ... All

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[43] F. Bacon, *The Advancement of Learning,* 121.

[44] Bacon affirms that this art was excellently handled "in precept" by Aristotle, and "in example" by Plato. Bacon, *The Advancement of Learning*, 126.

> these notes [of 1776-77] suggest that the content of the "Dialectic" is exhausted by the four antinomies of pure reason... [45]

The issues of transcendental psychology and theology were initially discussed in the last two antinomies. Only later, between 1778 and 1779, did Kant decide to give a separate treatment to these subjects in the sections on the "Paralogisms" and the "Ideal of Pure Reason." The decision to write the latter section, we learn from Guyer and Wood, was most probably due to Kant's having

> …too much material to treat [rational theology] as a single antinomy. ... Kant would also have been hard put to integrate his positive account of the necessary rational genesis of an ideal of pure reason... into any discussion that takes the form of an antinomy.[46]

In the case of the paralogisms, it also seems that the addition of the separate section was decided only after Kant had written his deduction, as a counterpart to the latter, which could not be stated in antithetical terms. Kant allowed himself to broaden the scope of the "Dialectic" in order to include other forms of refutation (namely, the paralogism and the refutation of the theological proofs) considering that these arguments, even if not antithetical in form, were still in harmony with the corrective aims of a dialectic as understood by Bacon.[47]

In sum, all these historical considerations make it possible to seriously consider the hypothesis that Kant's "Dialectic" was heavily inspired by ancient Academic skepticism. As a conclusion of this chapter I would like to stress the point that Kant's understanding and use of the skeptical method in his *Critique*, even though at first sight (and strictly following Kant's own

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[45] P. Guyer and A. Wood, "Introduction" to *Critique of Pure Reason*, 59-60.

[46] P. Guyer and A. Wood. "Introduction" to *Critique of Pure Reason*, 64.

[47] This is the reason I do not refer in this work to the two other parts of the "Dialectic," namely, the paralogisms and the refutation of the proofs of the existence of God. Even though they constitute refuting arguments, they do not have the antithetical form proper of ancient skepticism.

comments) seems to have a Pyrrhonian origin, is in fact more consistent with the fallibilism of the New Academy. This point is pursued further in the next chapter, where I focus on Kant's presentation and resolution of the antinomies.

Chapter IV

Between Judge and Lawyer:

Dialectic and Rhetoric in Kant's Antinomies

> What great and impressive orator, when he wished his speech
> to stir up the emotions in a jury or assembly,
> said the things that philosophers usually say?
> Cicero, *De Oratore*

I would like to begin this chapter by calling attention again to Kant's characterization of the genuine skeptic as a judge. Kant argues that

> … the *scepticus* … resembles a judge who weights the grounds for something as well as against it, and who listens to the plaintiff as well as the defendant, prior to and before *deciding the matter and passing judgment*. (*Blomberg Logic*, 210, my emphasis).

The critical philosopher behaves like the genuine skeptic, described by Kant as a judge. Even though this judge uses the skeptical method to recognize the natural undecidability of pure reason's metaphysical claims, he ultimately produces a conclusion that establishes the case. Thus, the critical philosopher is not a radical skeptic—i.e., a Pyrrhonist—who suspends judgment after the examination of the opposite arguments. But neither is he a dogmatist, who ascertains one claim based on mere logical grounds and disregards the arguments of the adversary. Rather, he is in a middle position between these two extreme attitudes.

In the "Transcendental Dialectic of Pure Reason," we find this critical philosopher facing the challenge of deciding the validity or legitimacy of reason's metaphysical claims. The "Antinomy or Antithetic of Pure Reason" exhibits such claims as confronting arguments, i.e., thesis and antithesis. The critical philosopher ought to examine these opposing claims in order to make a satisfactory verdict, that is, in order to decide which claim ought to prevail over the other.

Now, the arguments examined by this critical judge are, according to Kant, not adorned or made more or less plausible by means of rhetorical artifice, as a lawyer or rhetorician would present them. Instead, they are plainly put forward—they are formulated as closely as possible to the "nature of the issue":

> In these mutually conflicting arguments, I have not sought semblances (*Blendwerke*) in order to present (as one says) a lawyer's proof, which takes advantage of an opponent's carelessness and gladly permits a misunderstanding of the law in order to build the case for his own unjust claims on the refutation of the other side. Each of these proofs is drawn from the nature of the case and any advantage that could be given to us by the fallacies of dogmatists on either side is to be set aside (A430/B458).

In this paragraph we can again appreciate Kant's natural mistrust for rhetoric.[1] The lawyer or rhetorician is just a skillful dialectician, who adorns his views in order to make them appear more or less plausible. The critical philosopher, in contrast, approaches the same claims in their naked, plain presentation, for only in this manner can their equal (im)plausibility be exhibited and the source of the dialectical illusion be disclosed. If the arguments were presented in a more elaborate form—that is, appealing not only to rational grounds but also to emotional motives—one claim would *seem* more plausible than the other and the dispute would be resolved not by the "tribunal of reason" but, as it were, by the "tribunal of the heart." Therefore, Kant avoids

[1] The historical roots of this distrust are discussed in Chapter I, pp. 13-25.

any adventitious element that could incline the final decision of the critical philosopher by presenting the case (arguments *pro* and *con*) in the most "objective" or "plain" possible way.

But there is an ambiguity in Kant's strategy. On the one hand, Kant wants to unveil the metaphysical illusion based on the mere grounds of reason (without the involvement of obscuring sensible factors); on the other hand, he wants to show how speculative or pure reason alone cannot decide the dispute because it reaches its natural boundary in metaphysical questions. In other words, Kant wants to avoid any element foreign to reason in order not to bias the case, but *at the same time* he wants to demonstrate that reason alone, without the help of such foreign elements, cannot escape the metaphysical trap. Following the requirements of reason alone seems to lead directly to the skeptical undecidability of the puzzle. Kant does not want to endorse skeptical *epochê;* rather, he wants the critical philosopher to behave like judge and give a solution to the problem. The question that remains, therefore, is whether Kant is being consistent with his own project or not.

This chapter deals with this problem. In my view, no matter how philosophically sound Kant's strategy is to unveil the dialectical illusion of speculative reason, his *theoretical* solution still provides no *practical* orientation. Without taking into account the interests of reason, the rational agent would remain as befuddled by Kant's transcendental answer as he was by the non-critically examined antinomies. Kant is fully aware of this problem—he, in fact, introduces the consideration of reason's *interest,* in order to provide such practical orientation. In doing this, I argue, Kant abandons for a moment the role of critical judge and reclaims the role of the rhetorician or lawyer who examines the persuasiveness of the available arguments before choosing the ones he will actually use as weapons for his case.

In order to argue this, I first present the antinomies and their theoretical solution. The antinomies, once again, seem to have been highly inspired by Hume. Thus, I refer briefly to the

link between Hume's skepticism and Kant's antinomies and, then, give an outline of Kant's antinomical arguments. After this, I examine the section "On the Interest of Pure Reason," where I find not only a retrieval of the fallibilistic adoption of beliefs for the sake of action but also a clear reference to the link between this epistemological posture and rhetorical invention. I conclude that this section provides the clue to a *practical resolution* of the antinomies that surpasses skepticism and dogmatism and provides the best possible verdict for the case. I finally show how this practical solution, even if introducing non-rational grounds, proves much in agreement with the requirements of Kant's enlightened project.

1. **The Antinomies or Antithetic of Pure Reason**

1.1. *Humean Origin of the Antinomies*

The significance of the Antithetic in the context of Kant's *Critique* need not be more stressed than it already has been. The formulation of the antinomies exhibits the most drastic change in the evolution of Kant's thought—from his adherence to the metaphysical dogmatism of Wolff and Leibniz, still prominent in the *Inaugural Dissertation* (1770), to the critical assessment of metaphysical speculation in the *First Critique (1781).* As Kemp Smith summarizes it:

> Preoccupation with the problem of the antinomies was the chief cause of the revolution which took place in Kant's views in 1769, and which found expression in his dissertation of 1770. ... Kant's thinking was, of course, entirely diverted into a new channel (as his letter to Herz of February 21, 1772, shows), when he came to realize that the metaphysical validity or invalidity of thought must be decided prior to any attempt to discover a positive solution of such problems as are presented by the antinomies. And when, owing to the renewed influence of Hume, at some time subsequent to the date of the letter to Herz, ...the antinomy problems re-emerge, their discussion assumes critical form.[2]

[2] N. Kemp Smith, *A Commentary to Kant's Critique of Pure Reason*, 431-32. He refers here to Benno Erdmann's *Kants Kriticismus in der ersten und in der zweiten Auflage der Kritik der reinen Vernunft: Eine historische Untersuchung* (Leipzig:

In his letter to Garve of 1798, Kant wrote that it was the "Antinomy of Pure Reason" that

> …first *aroused me from my dogmatic slumber*, and drove me to the critique of reason itself, in order to resolve the scandal of ostensible contradiction of reason with itself.[3]

This paragraph immediately brings to mind the famous passage in the *Prolegomena to Any Future Metaphysics* where Kant uses the same phrasing, but this time in reference to Hume:

> I must freely admit that the remembrance of David Hume was the very thing that many years ago *first interrupted my dogmatic slumber* and gave a completely different direction to my investigations in the field of speculative philosophy. (*P,* 4:260).

The similarity between the two claims has brought about some perplexity among scholars. Lewis White Beck, for instance, seems to consider the two testimonies incompatible. A way out of this puzzle, he intimates, would be to regard the claim in the letter to Garve as a product of a "lapse of memory."[4] In contrast, Henry Allison suggests that there is indeed no contradiction between the two statements, even if he does not explain further the reason for the connection. Allison writes:

> It may seem strange to find Kant using virtually the same language to describe the discovery of the Antinomies as he had used to characterize the effect of his famous "recollection of David Hume," some fifteen years earlier. It is particularly strange, in light of the fact that Anglo-American students of Kant have come to see the problem of the Critique almost exclusively in terms of the question of the possibility of synthetic *a priori* judgments. Nonetheless a similar characterization of the Antinomies may be found in the *Prolegomena*... Such characterization

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Leopold Voss, 1878). For more recent and extensive treatments of this change of perspective see Lewis Robinson, "Contributions a l'histoire de l'evolution philosophique de Kant" *Revue de Metaphysique et de Morale* 31 (1924): 269-353, and Lothar Kreimendahl, *Kant: Der Durchbruch von 1769* (Köln: Jürgen Dinter Verlag für Philosophie, 1990).

[3] Kant, *Correspondence*, 12:258.

[4] L. White-Beck, "A Prussian Hume and a Scottish Kant" in *Essays on Kant and Hume* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1978), 119, n. 23.

> accurately reflects both the actual development of Kant's thought and the role of the Antinomies within the *Critique of Pure Reason*.[5]

I would like to follow Allison's indication that the misunderstanding only arises from the weight that Anglo-American scholarship has given to the "Analytic" in the interpretation of the *Critique*. The tight identification of Hume's skepticism with his argument on causality, at the core of the "Analytic," has led scholarship to understand Hume's skepticism and the antinomies as completely unrelated issues. Kantian scholarship has tended to neglect the fact that Hume's skepticism encompasses a wider variety of metaphysical claims concerning also the other cosmological issues that Kant discusses in his antinomies. As Guyer and Wood affirm in their Introduction to the *First Critique*, Kant's change of mind or awakening from the dogmatic slumber may have been due to:

> Kant's discovery, perhaps made in 1769, that several paradoxes about the infinite (long known and prominently discussed by a number of eighteen century philosophers)… could be resolved by distinguishing between the forms of intuition as forms of appearance, on the one hand, and the forms of thought as the forms of reality, on the other.[6]

According to Guyer and Wood, ever since the publication of Pierre Bayle's article about "Zeno of Elea" in his *Historical and Critical Dictionary* (1687), the discussion of the paradoxes had become very popular. In eighteenth-century philosophy, Bayle's article deeply influenced Berkeley's answer to skepticism, and Berkeley's opinion, in turn, influenced Hume.[7]

Kant, of course, was familiar with this discussion. Therefore, at least to a great extent, we can claim that Kant became interested in the antinomies' skeptical puzzles through Hume. There

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[5] H. Allison, *Kant's Transcendental Idealism* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1983), 35.

[6] P. Guyer and A. Wood, "Introduction" to Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason*, 37.

[7] See note 63 of P. Guyer and A. Wood's "Introduction," 709. Also see note 34 in Hume's *Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding,* where the Scottish philosopher acknowledges that the source of the skeptical arguments on the finitude or infinitude of space and time is to be found in Berkeley and Bayle (p. 116).

is no reason not to believe that Kant read closely the last section of the *Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding*, where Hume, in the context of an exposition of the different sorts of skepticism and their most prominent topics, talks about these puzzles.[8] Was this text the content of Kant's famous "recollection"? We do not know with certainty, but we can look at the specific sections in which Hume's refers to these arguments. About the finite or infinite divisibility of space, for instance, Hume writes:

> No priestly dogmas… ever shocked common sense more than the doctrine of the infinite divisibility of extension, with its consequences, as they are pompously displayed by all geometricians and metaphysicians, with a kind of triumph and exultation. A real quantity, infinitely less than any finite quantity, containing quantities infinitely less than itself, and so on, *in infinitum*; this is an edifice so bold and prodigious, that it is too weighty for any pretended demonstration to support, because it shocks the clearest and most natural principles of human reason. [9]

Regarding the divisibility of time, Hume also argues:

> The absurdity of these bold determinations of abstract science seems to become, if possible, still more palpable with regard to time than extension. An infinite number of real parts of time, passing in succession, and exhausted one after the other, appears so evident a contradiction that no man… whose judgment is not corrupted … would ever be able to admit of it.[10]

These sections endorse the empiricist view that the arguments on the indivisibility of space and time are only the result of rationalist speculation. They must have produced in Kant a new skeptical awareness, which most surely translates in Kant's ulterior elaboration of the first two antinomies.

Moreover, Hume refers in this section of the *Inquiry* to the problem of existence or non-existence of being, in terms that may have given to Kant an indication for the resolution of the

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[8] Except for the argument on freedom, which he discusses in a previous section entitled "Of Liberty and Necessity."

[9] D. Hume, *An Inquiry Concerning Human Understanding*, 117.

[10] Ibid.

fourth antinomy. Hume claims that the non-existence of a being is "no less conceivable and intelligible" than its existence. Hence

> … that Caesar or the angel Gabriel, or any being, never existed may be a false proposition, but still is perfectly conceivable and implies no contradiction.[11]

The similarities between Kant's more elaborate account of the antinomies and Hume's inchoate formulation constitute one important clue to understanding Kant's stance concerning skepticism and Academic fallibilism. As we will see in what follows, Kant's antinomies are an example of how to use the skeptical method against the pretension of speculative reason, but his resolution of these puzzles also aims at overcoming skeptical *epochê,* in the manner of Academic fallibilism. In the previous chapter I argued that Hume's adaptation of Academic fallibilism is followed by Kant's earlier "empiricist-skeptical phase."[12] Now, it is clear that this influence is still intact in the *Critique*. In fact, it seems that it was the recollection of this aspect of Humean thought that led Kant to produce his own critique of metaphysics in the "Dialectic of Pure Reason." Let us now examine the antinomies more closely and Kant's proposed resolution to these puzzles.

1.2. *The Antinomies and their Solution*

In spite of the antinomies' importance in the evolution of Kant's thought, most secondary literature, especially in the Anglo-American Analytic tradition, tends to overlook their historical and contextual aspects and rather focuses on discrete analyses of the logical validity of the

[11] Ibid, 122.

[12] Chapter III, section 2.2., pp. 89-95.

proofs.[13] Arguably for these commentators, Kant's proofs are not as sound as he claims—either they are built on confused or ambiguous concepts, or their inferences lack logical cogency. Among the commentators that hold the first opinion are Russell and, more recently, Bennett, whereas Strawson and Kemp Smith seem to hold the second opinion.[14] However interesting this discussion may be, in what follows I will distance myself from it, as I do not think that this punctilious debate turns out to be especially illuminating on the antinomies' significance in the context of Kant's critical project. As Graham Bird states, the proofs do not reflect Kant's opinion in any sense, but rather constitute a presentation of early modern scholastic debates:

> Some arguments are difficult, even impossible to sympathize with now, and may be regarded as no more than the metaphysical word-play and mock fights which are deplored in the preface and motivate Kant's projected reform of philosophy. In some respects the proofs and their conclusions provide puzzles, which can be given a contemporary sense, but neither the proofs nor the observations should be assumed to represent Kant's own views.[15]

Thus, Kant's representation of these metaphysical debates ought not be taken too literally. There may have been many different scholastic versions of the proofs (some, it is to be expected, with more vivid rhetorical flourishes than others), and Kant's synthesizing effort should not be evaluated on account of its accuracy.

Moreover, if as Kant argues, the antinomies have their origin in a universal and unavoidable tendency of reason to ascend from the conditioned to the unconditioned, we should be able to find them expressed not only in academic formulations of a specific period of philosophical

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[13] I must acknowledge that this is not the case with Allison, whose account of the antinomies is insightfully tied to a defense of Kant's transcendental idealism.

[14] On different grounds, Russell, Moore and Bennett question Kant's view of the mathematical concept of the infinite, and Strawson and Kemp Smith argue that Kant's proofs are guilty of a *petitio principii*. For a good synthesis of these criticisms, see H. Allison, *Kant's Transcendental Idealism*, 40-45; G. Bird, *The Revolutionary Kant*, 661-688; and Michelle Grier, *Kant's Doctrine of Transcendental Illusion* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 172-230.

[15] G. Bird, *The Revolutionary Kant,* 666.

thought (i.e., medieval scholastic or the skepticism of modern idealism) but also in popular manifestations of what Kant calls the "common understanding" (A550-B528). In fact, the antinomies are not only the invention of obtuse speculative minds—common riddles and children's games also give us good examples of their ordinary expression. The traditional English song "The green grass grows all around" as well as the Spanish riddle "*la lora está en la casa, la casa está en la esquina, la esquina está en...*"[16] instantiate in different cultural backgrounds this universal fascination of human reason with the idea of an unconditioned whole of nature. The philosophical presentation of both the scholastic and Kant's versions of the antithetical proofs are just more or less strict translations of an ordinary language phenomenon.

Kant's real and novel opinions, as Bird argues, are rather exhibited in the resolution of the conflicts; hence scholarship should turn its attention to the latter problem.[17] Accordingly, in what follows I will examine Kant's resolution of the antinomies in relation to his conception of the skeptical method, which was discussed in the previous chapter, in the hope of finding an Academic fallibilistic motive in it. As far as the proofs in themselves are concerned, here I will only summarize them.

1.2.1. The Mathematical Antinomies

The mathematical antinomies are so named because they concern the *categories of quantity and quality*.[18] Once we take these categories beyond the realm of experience, the question is whether the world—as the totality of existing things—is, temporally and spatially, either finite or infinite,

[16] "The parrot is in the house, the house is at the corner, the corner is on the block..."

[17] "Since the basic point of [Kant's] project is to resolve the apparent conflicts in the conclusions by claiming that the proofs are fundamentally flawed, it is less important to clarify them than to clarify why Kant thinks them illusory." G. Bird, *The Revolutionary Kant,* 670.

[18] In the *Prolegomena* the association between the table of categories and the four antinomies is more clearly presented than in the *Critique* (*P*, 4:338-39).

and this, with respect to its extension and its intension. Following these criteria, the two mathematical antinomies provide four possible world-configurations:

First Antinomy

Thesis	Antithesis
The world has a beginning in time and a boundary in space (it is *extensively finite*)	The world does not have a beginning in time or a boundary in space (it is *extensively infinite*).

Second Antinomy

Thesis	Antithesis
The world (as totality of substances) is a composite of simples (it is *intensively finite*).	The world (as totality of substances) is not a composite of simples (it is *intensively infinite*).

The dogmatic solution of these antinomies would require us to hold one of the positions, regardless of its contradictory proof. The skeptical outcome would ask us to consider both claims as equally *invalid or untenable* on the consideration that if, as Kant expresses it, "the world has no beginning, then it is too big for your concept," and if it does have a beginning "then, once again, it is too small for your concept" (A486/B 514). As a result, we would have to withhold judgment about the quantity and quality of the world.

Kant's critical examination of these antinomies, however, yields a different result: the equal *falsity* of both pair of theses and antitheses. This is, as a matter of fact, an interesting outcome, which cannot be identified with a skeptical answer. The skeptic is committed to the *undecidability* of the puzzle, whereas Kant is here actually providing a solution, according to which both assertions are *false*. In light of this, Kant's comment on skepticism is especially clear.

> Thus, the transcendental dialectic by no means provides support for skepticism, though it does for the skeptical method, which can point to the dialectic as an example of the great utility of letting the arguments of reason confront one another in the most complete freedom; such

> arguments, although they may not deliver what one was seeking, nevertheless will always deliver something useful and serviceable for the correction of our judgments (A507-B535).

Kant's non-skeptical resolution—i.e., the falsity of both positing that the world is finite and that it is infinite—derives directly from the falsity of the underlying presupposition, in which resides the error or illusion of reason: the realist view that the world of appearances exists in itself, and hence, ought to be quantifiable or measurable. Kant summarizes the solution in this way:

> If one regards the two propositions, "The world is infinite in magnitude," "The world is finite in magnitude," as contradictory opposites, then one assumes that the world (the whole series of appearances) is a thing in itself. For the world remains, even though I may rule out the infinite or finite regress in the series of its appearances. But if I take away this presupposition, or rather this transcendental illusion, and deny that it is a thing in itself, then the contradictory conflict of the two assertions is transformed into a merely dialectical conflict, and because the world does not exist in itself[19] (independently of the regressive series of my representations), it exists neither as an *in itself infinite whole* nor as an *in itself finite whole* (A504/B532-A505/B533, Kant's emphasis).

In his defense of Kant's transcendental idealism, H. Allison expounds Kant's resolution of the mathematical antinomies as having the form of a *modus tollens*. According to Allison, Kant's strategy can be summarized as such: if the world is a thing in itself (the realist presupposition), then it takes place in space and time. Since it takes place in space and time, it must be either finite or infinite. But given that the proofs contradict each other, the assertion that "the world is either finite or infinite" is false. By *modus tollens*, then, we must arrive at the conclusion that the presupposition that the world exists in itself is also false. In this way, Kant resolves the mathematical antinomies by positing *transcendental idealism*.

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[19] By suggestion of R. Makkreel, I translate here "the world does not exist in itself," even though Guyer and Wood translate "the world does not exist at all." The German text states: *"...und weil die Welt* ***gar nicht an sich*** *(unabhängig von der regressiven Reihe meiner Vorstellungen) existirt, so existirt sie weder als ein an sich unendliches, noch als ein an sich endliches Ganzes"* (my emphasis).

> The logical form of this argument is a *modus tollens* combined with an immediate inference. The denial of the consequent ("the world is either finite or infinite") is used in turn, to deny the antecedent (the world is a whole existing in itself"), which is then taken to entail the conclusion: 'appearances in general are nothing outside our representations.' This latter statement is the thesis of transcendental idealism. [20]

Once we presuppose transcendental idealism, the illusion that gives rise to the mathematical antinomies vanishes, and we come to the logical realization that *since the world is not in itself,* both assertions—that it is finite and that it is infinite—are *false.*

1.2.2. The Dynamical Antinomies

The dynamical antinomies concern the categories of *causality and necessity*. Once these categories are taken beyond the limits of experience, the puzzle becomes whether or not it is possible to conceive an intelligible type of causality—a causality that does not obey the laws of nature, namely, freedom—and whether or not, along with this intelligible causality, we can legitimately conceive an absolutely necessary being as a sort of "unmoved mover."

The dynamical antinomies may be summarized in this way:

Third Antinomy

Thesis	Antithesis
Causality in accordance to laws of nature is not the only one (in or outside the world)— there is also *freedom.*	Causality in accordance to laws of nature is the only one (in or outside the world)— there is *no freedom* at all.

Fourth Antinomy

Thesis	Antithesis
There is an *absolutely necessary being* as the cause of the world (in or outside of it).	There is *no absolutely necessary being* as the cause of the world (neither in nor outside of it).

[20] H. Allison, *Kant's Transcendental Idealism*, 50.

Kant's resolution of the dynamical antinomies yields the equal *validity* of both pairs of theses and antitheses. In his opinion, their logical inference is very different in kind from that of the mathematical antinomies. In the latter case, "the concept of the understanding grounding these ideas"—namely, the world of appearances—contains "solely a synthesis of homogeneous things." But in the dynamical antinomies the concepts—causality and necessity—involve instead a "synthesis of things not homogeneous" (A530/B558). Based on this particularity of the dynamical antinomies Kant posits the validity of the two outcomes of each one. The heterogeneity of the concepts involved allows the introduction of an intelligible aspect along with the phenomenal one:

> Hence it is that in the mathematical connection of series of appearances, none other than a sensible condition can enter. i.e., only one that is itself a part of the series; whereas the dynamic series of sensible conditions, on the contrary, allows a further condition different in kind, one that is not a part of the series but, as merely intelligible, lies outside the series; in this way, reason can be given satisfaction and the unconditioned can be posited prior to appearances without confounding the series of appearances, which is always conditioned, and without any violation of principles of the understanding (A531/B560).

Allison has interpreted this logical difference as regarding their object. According to him, "in the case of the mathematical antinomies, the thesis and antithesis are in direct conflict because they make *incompatible claims about the same object*." But in the case of the dynamical antinomies, "the two sides are shown to be merely arguing at cross purposes."[21] In fact, logically speaking, the world taken as in itself can be either finite or infinite, but not both; whereas, causality can be phenomenal (that is, mechanical) or intelligible, or both, if we just look at it from two different points of view. The property of being phenomenal is not necessarily

[21] H. Allison, *Kant's Transcendental Idealism*, 313.

contradictory with the property of being intelligible (at least, as far as causality is concerned), while the property of being finite is indeed contradictory with that of being infinite.

Moreover, as B. Carnois has suggested, the dynamical antinomies are of a very different nature than the mathematical because their antithesis has a prominent plausibility in view of Kant's discussion of the "Second Analogy" in the "Transcendental Analytic." Since causality has been proven there as constitutive of experience, we cannot deny, at least, that "there is causality as according to the laws of nature."[22] The question, rather, is whether or not the acceptance of phenomenal causality necessarily commits us to the denial of intelligible causality:

> If in the whole series of all occurrences one recognizes purely a natural necessity, is it nevertheless possible to regard the same occurrence, which on the one hand is a mere effect of nature, as on the other hand an effect of freedom, or will a direct contradiction between these two kinds of causality be found? (A543/B571).

As a result, the illusion at the base of the dynamical antinomies is rather simple to overcome. Although the theses and antitheses seem contradictory, in truth they are not. And they are not precisely because the core of transcendental idealism is the complementariness of appearances and things-in-themselves—the presupposition that

> …appearances do not make up the whole of reality ... as mere appearances, they must have a ground, which is not in itself an appearance, but rather a transcendental object which determines them as representations.[23]

Transcendental idealism is committed to the acceptance of the existence of a transcendental, intelligible realm. Hence, the dynamical antinomies are complimentary, because they depict a phenomenal and a nuomenal cause. The illusion only occurs if the proofs are seen

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[22] B. Carnois, *The Coherence of Kant's Doctrine of Freedom* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1987), 3-23.

[23] B. Carnois, *The Coherence of Kant's Doctrine of Freedom,* 9.

either from the point of view of dogmatic realism or dogmatic idealism. If appearances alone constitute the whole of reality, then we would be bound to accept the antitheses and deny the theses (A537/B535).[24] Or, if appearances do not give the whole and we dogmatically assert the existence of the intelligible realm, then we are bound to accept the theses and reject the antitheses. But, from the point of view of transcendental idealism, the illusion stands revealed, and there is no contradiction between both outcomes—they are both conceivable.

In order to solve the dynamical antinomies, in sum, one only needs to regard causality and necessity from two different points of view. In the "Remark on the Fourth Antinomy's Antithesis," Kant illustrates this with the example of two astronomers who, because of the particular geographical point of their observations, make inferences that are only apparently opposite:

> The mode of inference in both (fourth thesis and antithesis)... is entirely suited to common human reason, which falls repeatedly into the trap of disagreeing with itself when it considers two objects from two different standpoints. Mr. de Mairan took the controversy between two famous astronomers, arising from a similar difficulty in the choice of the standpoint, to be a sufficiently strange phenomenon that he wrote a special treatise about it. One inferred that the moon turns on its axis because it constantly turns the same side towards the earth; the other, that the moon does not turn on the axis, just because it constantly turns the same side toward the earth. Both inferences were correct, depending of the stand taken when observing the moon's motion (A460/B488).

The beauty of the transcendental idealist stance is that it allows the philosopher to appreciate both viewpoints concerning causality in their validity. However, this "doubleness" of perspective also brings about further difficulties, especially when it comes to making practical

[24] Kant expresses this claim in different words. He says, "for if appearances are things in themselves then freedom cannot be saved"(A537/B565). I prefer Carnois' formulation "if appearances constitute the whole of reality, then..." (ibid.) Kant's vocabulary here is necessarily confusing, since the identification between appearances and things in themselves could also be made from the standpoint of dogmatic idealism.

decisions. Kant was aware of such problems and provides an answer for them. In what follows I will approach these issues.

2. **Theoretical and Practical Consequences of the Antinomies' Resolution**

We can still ask ourselves how Kant's solution of the antinomies is different from the skeptical "withholding of belief." Kant tells us that the two mathematical antinomies are unverifiable by nature, and hence, none of the proofs is true, whereas the two dynamical antinomies are both plausible, since from the point of view of transcendental idealism they are not contradictory but rather complementary ways of explaining the same event. In fact, by doing this, Kant seems to be taking the cosmological questions further (by showing their equal validity or invalidity), but he does not seem to be offering any *conclusive answer*. In other words, transcendental idealism may be a philosophically sound doctrine, but it does not seem to provide a satisfactory answer to the common understanding. The latter wants to resolve the metaphysical puzzles of reason both theoretically and practically, and "resolving them" means *taking a stand* on the issues.

A few examples may help clarify this claim. First, let us take the stance of a scientist. If, as an astronomer, one is interested in resolving the problem of the temporal magnitude of the world (e.g., determining the exact date of the Big Bang), Kant's solution of the first mathematical antinomies, according to which both the temporal finitude and infinitude of the world are *false*, would strike one as absurd. Most probably, the transcendental idealist solution would appear to be a conundrum rather than a positive answer. The only option left (that is, if

one blindly believed in the authority of Kant) would be to withhold belief in the guise of the skeptics—that is, to stop the scientific investigation.[25]

Second, outside of the realm of science, one's frustration concerning the result of the two dynamical antinomies is even more evident. As an ordinary individual, what is one to believe concerning freedom after reading Kant's resolution of the third antinomy? One should conclude that a specific event can be explained by means of both an intelligible and a natural cause. In other words, facing the very difficult question of how to judge a murderer, one should conclude *both* that the murderer was free, and thus, *responsible*, and that he was bounded by his empirical character (education, parental influence, psychological pathologies, etc.), and thus, *not responsible*. These claims are for Kant complementary, and in fact, looking at the issue from the two points of view may broaden one's theoretical comprehension of the event (if one happens to be, for example, a sociologist). But they lead to a practically contradictory result. For, if this person is to be morally judged, how could her responsibility be decided upon? Would one need to pronounce her guilty of a crime or rather the victim of society?

Finally, what should one believe religiously, after considering Kant's assertion that both the thesis and antithesis of the fourth antinomy are conceivable? This latter answer, in particular, does not seem to be very helpful. To believe that it is *as plausible* that God exists *as that* He does not is more likely a recommendation of religious agnosticism than anything else. Neither the rational theist, nor the skeptical fideist, nor the atheist would be satisfied with this answer. They would argue that one should believe in the thesis or in the antithesis, in order to choose one's personal religious position—i.e., if one believes in the objective plausibility of God's existence, one is a rational theist; if one believes only subjectively in this plausibility, one is a fideist; and if

[25] Kant's ulterior recommendation of using the ideas of reason as regulative for scientific research provides the practical solution to this problem. I do not refer to this regulative use of ideas because my interest is related instead to the practical solution that he provides in the "Canon" to the dynamical antinomies.

one does not believe in it at all, one is an atheist. The three of them would agree that believing in the equal plausibility of God's existence and inexistence either does not mean anything, or means the same as "not believing in God."

In sum, for the common understanding there remains the question of *what to believe* and *how to proceed* on the basis of Kant's resolution of the antinomies. Another way to formulate this question is how the theoretical resolution of the antinomies differs from Pyrrhonic *epochê*. Since Kant asserted that transcendental idealism was the key to avoid not only dogmatism but also skepticism, the resolution of the antinomies should lead, both theoretically and practically, beyond mere suspension of belief.

However, at least from the theoretical point of view, Kant's resolution of the antinomies is different from skeptical *epochê*. The attitude that naturally ensues from the bare formulation of the antinomies, that is, from the "natural dialectic of reason,"[26] is perplexity. Without the transcendental resolution, the dialectical opposition of theses and antitheses produces only confusion and disorientation. In face of it, reason feels "disempowered," i.e., unable to continue with both its speculative and practical efforts. This may be, perhaps, the state of mind that the ancient skeptics praised as peace of mind (*ataraxia*). But, for a modern individual (and for a thinker whose motto is precisely the enlightened "*sapere aude*!"), this is rather an unbearable condition.

The transcendental approach, i.e., "transcendental dialectic," in contrast, explains the cause of the bewilderment, and this provides not only comfort but also a new starting point for inquiry. To know the source of the illusion makes it possible to begin to seek for an alternative, even if less ambitious, orientation to thinking. The most important outcome of tracing the bounds of human understanding is this mature form of "empowerment" of reason that arises

[26] Chapter III, pp. 95-99.

from the newly acquired acknowledgment of its legitimate domain. From now on, reason will not try to venture the dark seas of speculation, but it will be able to exert sovereignty in its own domain.

Theoretically, then, the resolution of the antinomies does not entail *epochê,* but only a restraint of the impulses of speculative reason. The new modest but valuable empowerment of reason proves essential to divest metaphysics of its arrogance, and put reason into the "secure course of science" (Bviii). This is something the common understanding can accept theoretically. However, the resolution of the antinomies still does not provide a *practical* guidance, i.e., it does not give orientation to human action.

In his second Preface to the *Critique of Pure Reason*, Kant considers this problem. He argues that criticism only changes the condition of metaphysical research in the schools but does not necessarily transform the way in which the common understanding approaches these questions practically:

> With this important alteration in the field of sciences, and with the **loss** of its hitherto imagined possessions that speculative reason must suffer, everything yet remains in the same advantageous state as it was before concerning the universal human concern and the utility that the world has so far drawn from the doctrines of pure reason, and the loss touches only the *monopoly of the schools* and in no way *the interests of human beings* (Bxxxi-ii, Kant's emphasis).

However, Kant's apparent unconcern with the practical consequences of metaphysical criticism does not mean that he leaves the practical problem in the hands of custom or tradition. Neither does he suggest the introduction of purely irrational and disconnected motives as the only possible ground for action concerning these matters. In this respect, Kant clearly disagrees with Hume's idea that "reason can only be the slave of the passions," for only our feelings can

determine the ends of our actions.[27] Rather Kant's strategy is to recognize that, in order to provide practical guidelines concerning these metaphysical issues, reason needs to incorporate into the equation non-logical, but neither irrational, factors—namely, reason's own theoretical and practical interests. Reason has a natural interest in guiding practical life, and as long as speculative ideas support this interest, they are valid. In other words, speculative beliefs can only be valid if they further a rational behavior. But let us see with more detail what are the practical interests of reason.

3. The Practical Interests of Reason

What supplies the necessary connection between the transcendental solution of the antinomies and the adoption of everyday beliefs concerning their problems? If nothing does, can we say that transcendental idealism, even if orienting thinking theoretically, leads again to the skeptical problem of *apraxia*, i.e., of the impossibility of action? In other words, is the critical philosopher completely unaided in his practical life by transcendental idealism?

Immediately after his logical exposition of the antinomies, and before their transcendental idealist resolution, Kant inserts a section entitled "On the Interest of Reason in these Conflicts" (A462/B490-A476/B504), which has been largely overlooked in Kantian scholarship. Some commentators claim that even though the section is very important, it is so clearly written that it does not require any interpretive guidance;[28] however, most scholars simply forget to mention it,[29] perhaps because they find it unrelated to the logical soundness of the antinomies or

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[27] See D. Hume, *Treatise on Human Nature*, 265-268.

[28] "This section, though extremely important, requires no lengthy comment. It is lucid and straight forward."N. Kemp Smith, *A Commentary*, p. 498.

[29] This is, for example, the case of G. Bird's otherwise very complete account of the antithetic, in *The Revolutionary Kant.*

dispensable for their accurate exposition. In my opinion, this section provides an exposition of the antinomies from the point of view of rhetorical invention that is worth examining in detail, and without which the possibility of a practical guidance of reason in metaphysical matters would be completely truncated.

In this section, Kant considers the antinomical puzzles from a very different perspective. He no longer plays the role of the transcendental judge who tries to understand the arguments at stake in their purest rational form, divested of any emotional or persuasive element, as he did in the first part of the exposition:

> We have represented the glittering pretensions of reason to extend its territory beyond all the bounds of experience only in dry formulas, which contain merely the ground of reason's legal claims; and, as is fitting for a transcendental philosophy, we have divested these claims of everything empirical, even though the full splendor of reason's assertions can shine forth only in such a combination (A463/B491).

Here instead, Kant allows himself to closely examine the two positions in conflict taking into account their "empirical" aspects. These empirical aspects (in virtue of which, let us not forget, "the full splendor of reason's assertions can shine forth"!) are the interests that reason naturally takes in supporting or refuting metaphysical claims. These interests explain the adherence of the corresponding partisans (empiricists and dogmatists) and the popularity or unpopularity that their claims enjoy within the vast audience of humanity:

> Since in this case we would consult not the logical criterion of truth but merely our interest, our present investigation...will have the utility of making it comprehensible why the participants in this dispute have sooner taken one side than the other, even if no superior insight into the object has been the cause of it, and it likewise explains still other ancillary things, e.g., the zealous heat of the one side and the cold assurance of the other, and why they hail the one party with joyful approval and are irreconcilably prejudiced against the other (A465/B493).

Kant's examination of the interests involved in both positions of reason recreates what the orator does during the first part of his endeavor—namely, when he invents his arguments and

evaluates them on the grounds of their persuasiveness. In Cicero's *De Oratore,* Antonius—one of the characters of the dialogue—explains how, while preparing his speech, he puts himself in the position of all the parties at stake in order to examine the practical validity of each point of view:

> I play three characters, myself, my opponent and the arbitrator. Whatever consideration is likely to prove more helpful than embarrassing, I decide to discuss; wherever I find more harm and good, I entirely reject and discard the topic concerned. In this way, I gain the advantage of reflecting first on what to say, and saying it later… (*DO* II, 103).

Kant follows the advice of Antonius when he decides to examine the interests involved in each party's point of view and indicates which arguments are more persuasive. Such interests are fundamental to orientate the individual practically. Without them, Kant argues, one would not know how to act and would remain in a state of permanent irresolution:

> If a human being could renounce all interests, and, indifferent to all consequences, consider the assertions of reason merely according to their grounds, then, supposing that he knows no way of escaping from the dilemma except by confessing allegiance to one or the other of the conflicting doctrines, such a person would be in a state of ceaseless vacillation. (A475/B503).

Thus, Kant puts himself into the shoes of the rhetorician for a brief moment and claims that it is essential to take sides, assenting to the interests of reason, in order to resolve the antinomies *practically*. Only a detour into the perspective of the lawyer will make action possible concerning these matters. Let us now see which are the interests of each side.

3.1. *The case*

According to Kant, the two contenders in this trial are the *empiricists* and the *dogmatists*. The former maintain the assertions of the antitheses, while the latter hold those of the theses, as can be summarized in following table:

	Empiricists (antitheses)	**Dogmatists** (theses)
First Antinomy	The world does not have a beginning in time or a boundary in space (it is **extensively infinite**).	The world has a beginning in time and a boundary in space (it is **extensively finite**).
Second Antinomy	The world (as totality of substances) is not a composite of simples (it is **intensively infinite**).	The world (as totality of substances) is a composite of simples (it is **intensively finite**).
Third Antinomy	Causality in accordance to laws of nature is the only one (in or outside the world)—there is **no freedom** at all.	Causality in accordance to laws of nature is not the only one (in or outside the world)—there is also **freedom.**
Fourth Antinomy	There is **no absolutely necessary being** as the cause of the world (neither in nor outside of it).	There is an **absolutely necessary** being as the cause of the world (in or outside of it).

The dogmatic side has a *practical interest*, insofar as the theses bestow validity to the principles of morality and religion. It also has a *speculative interest*, for its arguments bring about the comprehension of the whole of conditions *a priori*.

The *empiricist* side, in turn, leaves out the *practical interest* of reason. It does not provide support to moral and religious ideas, but rather it demands that reason be doubtful of them. It holds, however, a *speculative interest*—although opposite to that of the dogmatic side. The empiricist side advocates for the disciplining of reason. It wants to remind reason at every step that it should restrict its claims to the domain of experience and never dare go beyond it by postulating concepts that are not verifiable.

The *dogmatist's* side enjoys more popularity than the *empiricist's* side. This is due to the dogmatists' furthering of the practical and speculative interests. Since the idea of an

"unconditioned beginning for every synthesis" gives to the common understanding a more stable (if not completely safe) resting place, the audience (that is, any rational human being) will feel naturally inclined to accept its arguments. Moreover, this "unconditioned beginning" agrees with the decrees of morality and religion, which enjoy a great popularity.

The lack of practical interest, along with its restrictive speculative concern, yield *empiricism's poor popularity*. Even if promoting the cause of science, empiricism does not satisfy the common understanding's need for speculative and practical security:

> ...Empiricism is robbed completely of all popularity, by transcendentally idealizing reason; and for all the disadvantages it may contain regarding the supreme practical principles, we need have no apprehension that it will ever pass beyond the boundary of the schools, and acquire any considerable regard in the community or any favor among a great multitude (A474/B502).

But what does Kant mean by "popularity"? Does he mean what the masses unreflectively accept, i.e., prejudice and false belief?

Popularity is a concept that Kant uses frequently and, curiously enough, in relation to "eloquence." As we saw in Chapter I, Kant regrets in both Prefaces to the *First Critique* that he is not more eloquent—i.e., not able to endow his philosophy with a more popular style.[30] Even though he also justifies himself by claiming that the nature of his subject demands the dryness of his style, his attempts to reach popularity are not negligible. To a great extent, it could be said that Kant wrote his *Prolegomena* in an effort to popularize the highly misunderstood and poorly read *Critique of Pure Reason*.

Moreover, Kant often expresses his deep admiration for Mendelssohn's balance between depth of thought and elegant expression,[31] and he commends above all Hume and Shaftesbury

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[30] Chapter I, n. 5, p. 13.

[31] "It is not given to everyone to write so subtlety and yet also so alluringly as David Hume, or so profoundly and at the same time so elegantly as Moses Mendelssohn, but I could well have given my presentation popularity (as I

for their "ability to descend to the public's power of comprehension" (*Jäsche Logic,* 48). In order to gain a popular style, Kant advises the reading of the classics, especially Cicero and Homer (*Jäsche Logic,* 47).

But again, was not Kant against any effort to embellish and, in this way, make more persuasive claims that reason alone should be able to examine and accept if objectively true? How are we to understand Kant's apparent vacillation between his negative appraisal of rhetoric and his preoccupation with popularity?

The link between popularity and eloquence will help us clarify this problem. Let us remember that in the *Critique of Judgment,* Kant had commended a form of rhetoric that he identified with "well-spokenness" and "eloquence." This conception of eloquence, as I said before, has its origin in the modern adaptation of the Stoic ideal of oratory.[32] According to that ideal, rhetoric should limit itself to the plain and sober exposition of reason's claims, without any appeal to stylistic and pathetic devices. Understood from this point of view, eloquence is identified with the oratorical "plain style"—a style that is naturally agreeable to reason, and reflects the moral qualities of the orator. It is devoid of any manipulating intention and only puts forward claims of which the orator himself is already rationally convinced.

This eloquence alone produces the sort of popularity that Kant wishes he could attain—a popularity that he defines in his *Logic,* as a "perfection of cognition" (*Jäsche Logic,* 48). Kant affirms that popularity provides a proof of the "external extension" of judgments. In other

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flatter myself) if all I had wanted to do was to sketch a plan and commend its execution to others, and had not taken to heart the well being of the science that kept me occupied for so long; for after all it requires great perseverance and also indeed not a little self denial to set aside the enticement of an earlier, favorable reception for the expectation of an admittedly later, but lasting approval" (*P,* 4:262).

[32] Chapter I, 1.2., pp. 18-28.

words, popularity tests the judgments' logical validity against what we could call their "empirical universality," i.e., their actual acceptance among men:

> …this truly popular perfection of cognition is in fact a great and rare perfection, which shows much insight into the science. It has this merit too, in addition to many others, that it can provide a proof of complete insight into a thing. For the merely scholastic examination of a cognition leaves doubt as to whether that examination is not one-sided and whether the cognition in itself has a worth admitted by all men *(Jäsche Logic,* 48).

The popularity of a claim works as a guarantee that the interests involved in its furthering are not purely private. If an argument is eloquently expressed, it ought to be also rationally convincing, for it appeals only to the universal interests of reason—the very interests that Kant had explained in the section examined above. A view that fulfills these requirements is, therefore, "popular" in the Kantian sense.

As a perfection of cognition, this universal popularity is a touchstone of truth. It confers on a claim a sort of plausibility, beyond its mere logical validity or experiential probability. We can call this a *practical plausibility*. Although it is not a logical (or transcendentally logical) plausibility, neither is it irrational, for it is not based on mere pathological inclinations—private desires or emotions. Rather, this plausibility is the result of reason's acknowledgment of its practical involvement—of its need to give grounds to human action.

Although Kant does not explicitly link the concepts of "popularity" and "plausibility," his distinction between probability (*Wahrscheinlichkeit*) and plausibility (*Scheinbarkeit*) may be useful to support this claim. According to R. Makkreel, Kant's distinction provides a criterion in the evaluation of metaphysical claims. Although these claims do not have different degrees of *probability,* they do have different degrees of *plausibility*:

> If between two alternatives there is more evidence on one side than on the other, we are dealing with a probability that can be calculated mathematically. Philosophical or metaphysical alternatives are not mathematically measurable and involve questions of *subjective plausibility*.[33]

Kant's evaluation of the interests of reason involved in the antinomies entails the conclusion that the popularity of the dogmatic side is due to the view's having an important *subjective plausibility*. Even though the idea of an unconditioned beginning cannot be assessed as *objectively probable*, it is *practically plausible*, and so, it can be *universally preferred* to its opposite. In other words, reason's universal interest to further action gives a sort of plausibility to the idea of the unconditioned beginning, which, although subjective, is not private—rather it furthers human action universally and necessarily.

In Chapter II, we had seen how Cicero's fallibilism had proposed a gradation of presentations, taking into account their degree of probability. The more probable presentation was the "tested" (i.e., empirically proved) and "stable" (i.e., in agreement with previous beliefs) presentation. The latter criterion (i.e., stability) can be also used to assess metaphysical claims. When Kant speaks of the "popularity" of a claim, we can translate his terminology into Aristotelian and Ciceronian "reputability." As Cicero had borrowed from Aristotle, a claim that is based on "stable" presentations is usually one that is "reputable" or in agreement with common beliefs on the issue. Hence, Kant's *practical plausibility* recreates, for metaphysical beliefs, this fallibilist criterion of "stability" or "reputability." As a result, a claim that is not "probable" in the experiential sense can still be legitimately held in view of its *practical plausibility* or *reputability*.

[33] R. Makkreel, "Kant's Responses to Skepticism," 103 (my emphasis).

3.2. *The verdict*

In light of this, it is easier to understand the root of Kant's allegiances in the antinomical dispute. Kant is inclined to accept the dogmatists' view in what concerns the two dynamical claims and the empiricists' in what concerns the mathematical ones. This strategy, as we will see now, allows Kant to situate himself between the two extremes of skepticism and dogmatism.

The arguments of empiricism, Kant affirms, are not very popular. Yet he does not seem to be too worried about this outcome. Kant's evaluation of empiricism agrees with his previous remarks about the skeptical method and skepticism. When empiricism is only used as a way of recognizing the natural fallibility of reason, it is akin to the skeptical method, and its results are fruitful. But when it becomes dogmatic, that is, when it asserts that reason's ideas are void of any *practical plausibility* whatsoever, it is identifiable with that kind of skepticism that Kant had blamed for making completely impossible the cultivation of the intellect's soil:

> ... if the empirical philosopher, with his antithesis, had no other intention than to strike down the impertinent curiosity and presumptuousness of those who so far mistake the true vocation of reason that they make most of insight and knowledge, just where insight and knowledge really cease... then his principle would be a maxim for moderating our claims … But if empiricism itself becomes dogmatic in regard to the ideas (as frequently happens), and boldly denies whatever lies beyond the sphere of its intuitive cognitions, then it itself makes the same mistake of immodesty, which is all the more blamable here, because it causes an irreparable disadvantage to the practical interest of reason (A470/B498-A471/B499).

The practical interests of reason are to be safeguarded against empiricist's *dogmatic skepticism*. However, the claims of reason are not to be justified entirely on speculative grounds, lest they, once again, give rise to reason's metaphysical arrogance.

This is, in brief, Kant's stake. Having taken into consideration, as the good rhetorician does, both the truth and the persuasiveness of each claim, he can now go back to the role of the judge, and pronounce his verdict, namely, that the empiricist's interest in disciplining reason ought to

be maintained while furthering, for practical purposes, the popular idea of an unconditioned beginning of the universe.

4. From *Apraxia* to Heteronomy and Irresolution

The interests of reason are crucial factors in the practical resolution of the antinomical issues. Kant's theoretical resolution, i.e., transcendental idealism, although providing a new direction to speculative research, had also proved insufficient to respond to the practical needs of reason. I argued above that if Kant had not introduced the consideration of the interests of reason in his account of the antinomies, his transcendental clarification would have led to the same practical result of skepticism, that is, *apraxia*. Not being able to adopt any positive belief concerning the metaphysical issues discussed in the antinomies, the rational agent would find himself in the same position than the skeptic who withholds belief permanently, i.e., he would necessarily be unable to act.

Before I refer again to Kant's position regarding this problem, let us recapitulate Cicero and Hume's opinion about it. Cicero postulates prudence as a principle of action. Unlike the radical skeptic, the fallibilist can adopt beliefs on the grounds of more or less probable presentations. Following the Isocratean and Aristotelian tradition, Cicero holds that the primary virtue of the fallibilist is his capacity to deliberate, namely, to ponder the probable outcomes of different courses of action. In this way, Cicero argues, the fallibilistic sage is a prudent man, who acts in accordance with beliefs that are held with enough probability or plausibility, even if not with absolute certainty. *Apraxia*, thus, is no longer a problem for the Academic fallibilist.[34]

Hume, as a modern fallibilist, seems to hold a similar position. He criticizes Pyrrhonism as a form of extreme skepticism, leading to the destruction of the whole edifice of science and

[34] Chapter II, section 2.3. pp. 66-70.

morality.[35] According to Hume, Pyrrhonic doubt is either not a serious doctrine or one that aims at undermining inquiry and social life. In spite of this harsh criticism, however, Hume does not seem to worry too much about the practical consequences of Pyrrhonism. In fact, Hume considers *apraxia* rather as a pseudo-problem. According to him, no human being (not even Pyrrho or Arcesilas!) could ever live in a complete state of *epochê*. Theoretical perplexity, Hume argues, has never precluded or prevented human action. At some point, even the most radical skeptic must adopt certain beliefs, in order to be able to act. Hence Hume's famous affirmation that nature saves us from skeptical doubt:

> A Pyrrhonian cannot expect that that his philosophy will have any constant influence on the mind. Or if it had, that its influence would be beneficial to society. On the contrary, he must acknowledge, if he will acknowledge anything that all human life must perish, were his principles universally and steadily to prevail. All discourse, all action would immediately cease; and men remain in total lethargy, till the necessities of nature, unsatisfied, put an end to their miserable existence. It is true: so fatal an event is very little to be dreaded. Nature is always too strong for principle. And though a Pyrrhonian may throw himself or others into a momentary amazement and confusion by his profound reasonings; the first and most trivial event in life, will put to flight all his doubts and scruples, and leave him the same, in every point of action and speculation...[36]

Kant follows Hume in his characterization of the skeptics as a sect of swindlers and, he also seems to consider that *apraxia* is not a real threat to human life. Even in regards to the natural undecidability of metaphysical disputes, Kant asserts, the need to act will always force us to adopt a particular belief. As I argued before, the interests of reason always intervene, and the rational agent spontaneously takes a certain stake in the issue:

> ... this play of merely speculative reason would disappear like the phantom images of a dream, and he [who is involved in the dispute] would choose his principles *merely* according to practical interest (A475/B503).

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[35] Chapter III, p. 90.

[36] D. Hume, *An Inquiry Concerning Human Understanding*, 119.

But if the problem of *apraxia* is just a pseudo-problem, why do Hume and Kant worry so much about skeptical *epochê*? Why does Kant regard the empiricist's efforts to undermine the belief in freedom and the existence of God as a danger to human reason? Why does Hume take the pains to distinguish Academic skepticism from Pyrrhonism?

The undesirable practical consequence of skeptical *epochê*, as Kant and Hume very well understood it, is not *apraxia*. Faced with both the equal validity of antinomical claims and the personal need to act, if the rational agent were not to take into consideration the interests of reason, he would only have two practical options: *heteronomy* or *irresoluteness*.

Heteronomy is the traditional Pyrrhonic outcome—namely, to rely completely on the moral and religious judgments of one's tradition.[37] Another good example of this outcome is provided by Descartes' doctrine of a provisional morality in the *Discourse of Method*. The first of Descartes' maxims, let us remember, is to "obey the laws and customs of my country, constantly holding onto the religion in which, by God's grace, I had been instructed from my childhood."[38] This choice, definitive for Pyrrho and merely provisional for Descartes, amounts to the acceptance of someone else's rule over one's will, and is, from the point of view of the enlightenment (be it Scottish or German), absolutely undesirable.

Irresoluteness constitutes a somewhat freer behavior but not yet a wholly autonomous way of acting. The person entangled in the antithetic would still be inclined to adopt a belief for the sake of action. However, since no belief is weightier than its opposite, he would also feel inclined to change his mind every now and again:

> Today it would strike him as convincing that the human will is free; tomorrow, when he considers the indissoluble chain of nature, he would side with the view that freedom is nothing but self-deception, and that everything is mere nature (A475/B503).

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[37] Chapter III, p. 86.

[38] R. Descartes, *Discourse de la Méthode,* VI. 23-25.

If today one is committed to believing in freedom and, as a result, in moral responsibility, one would most probably act accordingly, that is, morally, but if tomorrow one is committed to believing in determinism, one would not necessarily mind acting irresponsibly.

Curiously, while Kant would completely disagree with the first maxim of Descartes' provisional morals (the maxim of heteronomy), he would wholeheartedly approve of the second: "to be as firm and resolute in my actions as I could, and to follow the most doubtful opinions, once I had decided on them, with no less constancy than if they had been very well assured."[39] Resolution in action is, then, a necessary although not yet sufficient condition of an autonomous, enlightened character.

We must not forget Kant's warning at the end of the section on the interests of reason—namely, that if we "could renounce to all interest" and "consider the assertions of reason merely according to their grounds," we would be "in a state of *ceaseless vacillation*" (A475/B504, my emphasis). The role of the interests of reason in the outcome of the antinomies is precisely to incline the balance practically, so that we can both think freely and act resolutely, even if only on the basis of *subjective practical plausibility*, and not on the basis of speculative certainty.

The enlightened man shares much with the prudent fallibilist, as characterized by Cicero. Cicero's prudence requires both autonomy and resoluteness without precluding a permanent critical exercise. His advice of acting on the basis of empirical probabilities can be translated into acting on the basis of *practical plausibility,* when the deliberation concerns the more difficult questions of metaphysical beliefs. In the following chapter, I will approach more closely this problem. The "Doctrine of Method" provides, in my view, the best example of practical deliberation about metaphysical beliefs that Kant offers in the *Critique of Pure Reason*.

[39] Ibid.

Chapter V

Practically Believing:

The Polemical Use of Reason and our Belief in Attainable Happiness

> The *deux ex machina* is the greatest absurdity one could hit upon
> in the determination of the origin and validity of our cognitions.
> It has, besides its vicious circularity ... also this additional disadvantage:
> it encourages all sorts of wild notions and every pious and speculative brainstorm.
> Kant, *Letter to Herz*

In the previous chapter, I considered Kant's resolution of the antinomies and its practical consequences. I argued that, following Hume's criticism of Pyrrhonism, Kant introduces the concept of the "interests" of reason, in order to avoid the practical problems that necessarily derive from the skeptical challenge of the antinomies. The theoretical resolution of the antinomies does not provide enough grounds to action unless a non-logical element, that of an "interest" enters the equation. Only by examining the interests that naturally (that is, universally) accompany every antinomical assertion can human beings be justified in assuming specific *practical beliefs*—i.e., beliefs that are still uncertain, but that ground autonomous and resolute action.

In this chapter, I focus on two sections of the "Transcendental Doctrine of Method," namely, "The Discipline of Pure Reason in its Polemical Use" and the "Canon of Pure Reason." The "Doctrine of Method" has not been given much attention in the *Critique's* scholarship.

Usually seen as a loose section whose components were written in different times, it has been treated part by part without attempting to establish its internal cohesion. Most commentators consider it a result of Kant's architectonical demands and affirm that it does not add much to the issues discussed previously in the *Critique*. In his comment about the section on "polemical use of reason," for instance, Kemp Smith merely provides a quotation of the text and a loose opinion about it—namely, that the section "contains an admirable defense of the value of skepticism."[1] I disagree with this characterization as well as with the general consideration that the section is a patch of previously constructed and unrelated doctrines.

It is true, however, that the unity of the "Doctrine of Method" is difficult to grasp. Nonetheless, this difficulty should not prevent us from trying to understand its contents in a more comprehensive way. In this chapter, I present an interpretation that points to the connection of one section of the "Discipline"—"On the Polemical use of Reason"—with the "Canon of Pure Reason." In these sections, Kant develops the theoretical and practical consequences of the "Dialectic." The first one argues for a rhetorical employment of speculative reason, and the second provides the practical justification of the belief in the existence of God—the reasons why we can hold such existence as practically necessary, even though we can never claim it as theoretically necessary (i.e., as certain). In my view, these two sections complete the arguments explored in the previous chapter and lead to a closure of the discussion on the influence of Cicero's Academic fallibilism in Kant's thought.

1. **The Doctrine of Method: Positive and Negative Rules**

[1] See, for example, N. Kemp Smith, *A Commentary*, p. 563, and T. D. Weldon, *Kant's Critique of Pure Reason* (London: Oxford University Press, 1958). Weldon affirms: "Even the architectonic justification for the inclusion of this chapter is rather weak. … Consequently it is not surprising to find that the discipline is simply a brief recapitulation of the principal critical doctrines," 246.

Kant begins the "Doctrine of Method" with the metaphor of building an edifice. Any building enterprise requires the selection of the materials based on the determination of their properties (solidity, resistance, etc.), as well as the design of the edification's structure. In the case of the edifice of human knowledge, analogously, the critique provides the evaluation of the materials, and, given their rather weak nature, has forced the design to be of a modest architecture. In Kant's words:

> ... in the "Transcendental Doctrine of the Elements" we have made an estimate of the building materials, and determined for what sort of edifice, with what height and strength, they would suffice. It turned out, of course, that although we had in mind a tower that would reach the heavens, the supply of materials sufficed only for dwelling that was just roomy enough for our business on the plane of experience and high enough to survey it... (A707/B735).

Bearing in mind this metaphor, Kant's characterization of the skeptics, in the "Preface to the First Edition" of the *Critique*, as "nomads who abhor all permanent cultivation of the soil" (Aix) gains a fuller meaning. Nomads, who do not cultivate the soil, have even fewer reasons for building permanent dwelling places. Busy as they are with undermining any sort of belief, the skeptics direct their efforts to disclosing the weakness of the materials and the impossibility of building any edifice of knowledge on their basis.

In contrast, the dogmatists tend to overestimate the solidity of their building materials, making plans for Babel towers where it is illusory to even erect a shack. Once again, we can observe Kant's interest in placing his critical philosophy at a middle point between the two opposite perspectives of skepticism and dogmatism—only the critical perspective leads to the building of a modest but solid dwelling. Such a dwelling requires a *discipline*, a *canon*, an *architectonic* and a *history* of pure reason. The discipline concerns the rules that reason ought to follow so that its speculative impulses be restrained. It involves, according to Kant, a sort of "negative legislation," a "system of caution and self-examination" (A711/B739). In the analogy of the

building plan, we can say that the discipline works as a set of rules that indicate what cannot be done with the construction materials—e.g., "do not make roof beams longer than five feet," or "do not exceed sixty degrees in the curvature of the window arches." The canon is the counterpart of the discipline. It states the positive rules, that is, rules that assert what sort of things may be expected to be done with the available materials. The canon comprises the "sum total of the *a priori* principles of the correct use of certain cognitive faculties in general" (A796/B824). These *a priori* principles, or rules for the correct use of pure reason, are the necessary complement of the discipline's limiting rules. For, what would it mean to say that I "must not make roof beams longer than five feet," if not that I am allowed to "make roof beams five feet long or smaller"? In other words, a discipline of pure reason, without a consideration of reason's positive capabilities, would make no sense at all. Whenever someone restricts my behavior, the result ought to be a narrower but still possible scope of action. Accordingly, in this chapter I intend to show how the discipline and the cannon of pure reason complement each other in regard to the resolution of the "Dialectic."

2. **Rhetoric in the Metaphysical Arena: the Polemical Use of Reason**

One of Kant's most interesting limiting rules in the "Discipline of Pure Reason" is that one can put forward theoretical arguments concerning metaphysical claims only if one holds them "polemically." Kant says that committing to the uncertainty of metaphysical claims does not require restraining from polemically (or, in my interpretation, rhetorically) asserting them: "...although reason can never *refuse* critique, it does not always have cause to *shrink* from it" (A739/B767, Kant's emphasis).

The tribunal of philosophical critique takes care of limiting the pretensions of theoretical reason, but when reason operates in the more mundane scenario of public conversation, it needs

not remain silent concerning metaphysical issues. There, reason is justified *to assert what it nonetheless doubts*, provided that it aims solely at defending itself from opposite dogmatic assertions:

> ... it is quite different if it does not have to deal with the censure of a judge, but with the claims of its fellow citizens, against which it has merely to defend itself. For since the latter would be just as dogmatic, though in denial, as reason would be in its affirmation, there can be a justification *ad hominem*, which secures it against all interference and provides it with a title to its possession that need shrink from no foreign pretensions, even though it cannot itself be sufficiently proved [according to the truth] (A739/B767).

Kant's concern about the eighteen-century debates on the immortality of soul and the existence of God may explain his insistence on the rightful use of metaphysical claims as "defense arguments."[2] When it comes to debating these issues, Kant argues, it is legitimate to use metaphysical arguments as weapons of war (A751/B779) in order to counteract the pretensions of the dogmatists. Such weapons would take the form of rhetorical arguments *ad hominem*, and *vetoes* (A739/B767). Kant understands *ad hominem* arguments as arguments that only attack the contender's claim but do not positively assert anything.[3] They work in the same way as *vetoes*, that is, the lawyer's refutation of a contender's claim on the basis that is has not been proven or that it is not clear (in rhetorical jargon, the expression used is the Latin *non liquet*). Both the *ad hominem* and the *vetoes* are arguments that seek to invalidate the opponent's view but do not claim to prove any other position whatsoever.

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[2] Kant was acquainted with the reactions that Hume's posthumously published *Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion* had produced in German thinkers like Hamman and Jacobi. See Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, editor's note 15 to the "Doctrine of Method," 752.

[3] This is in fact a very common understanding of the *ad hominem* argument. Although, technically it is incorrect (strictly speaking, an argument *ad hominem* invalidates a claim by pointing to the flawed character of the person who holds it), philosophy has traditionally understood it in the way Kant does here. For a more precise account of the two possible characterizations of the *ad hominem*, see T. Sloane, *Encyclopedia of Rhetoric* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 1-3.

Kant considers here the utility of a rhetorical use of reason, concerning metaphysical claims. But why does he think that one should theoretically hold something that one doubts, in order to, as it were, defend oneself? Isn't this consideration rather inconsistent with the whole critical effort of his philosophy? And, morally speaking, doesn't it look like Kant is somehow advising the unscrupulous behavior of a typical sophist? Would it not be more appropriate and morally commendable to choose to remain silent in such issues one cannot hold with certainty and let others continue to hold their own dogmatic assertions as they wish?

Kant seems to consider that one should not do this, in view of two considerations. First, because people have the right to possess their own opinions, even if still doubting them (that is, even if they are just that, opinions). Kant speaks of the "title to possession" that one should rightfully hold of every personal assertion, providing, of course, that these assertions have some plausibility. Entailed by this claim, there is a defense of the right to publicly hold individual views without fearing censure:

> This [freedom of publicly holding one's opinion] lies already in the original right of human reason, which recognizes no other judge than universal human reason itself, in which everyone has a voice; and since all improvement of which our condition is capable must come from this, such a right is holy, and must not be curtailed (A752/B780).

Second, because if one does not produce these merely polemical arguments, one's opponent would believe that his/her claims have *objective validity*. This seems to be a sort of pedagogical consideration: since critical philosophy is not popular, and therefore, it cannot reach every rational agent, it is one's duty as an enlightened individual to, as it were, find ways to let others see the limits of their own dogmatic views by opposing them with one's own (also unproven) views.

The dilemma, then, seems to be either to admit one's lack of certainty in metaphysical convictions and allow the adversary to win the battle or to use the *non liquet* and preserve by this means one's opinion, while weakening the adversary's dogmatic assertions.

This means that in the specific scenario of the disputes concerning the existence of God, the enlightened individual, who holds God's existence merely on practical grounds, should be able to defend his position *theoretically* against the atheist, who holds God's inexistence, and leaves morality without the incentive that the idea of God naturally brings about.

Not being a theist himself, one (the enlightened individual) will not assert dogmatically the existence of God; however, one can still respond to the atheist with a *non liquet*:

> For the opponent [the atheist] we can have our *non liquet* ready, which must unfailingly confound him, while we do not need to refute his retort, for we always have in reserve the subjective maxims of reason, which he necessarily lacks, and under their protection we can regard all his shadow-boxing with tranquility and indifference (A743/B771).

The reasons that one has to retort to the theist with a *non liquet* are practical. Subjective maxims of reason, that is, practical considerations, advise believing in the existence of God and the immortality of the soul. But since what is at stake in the dispute is the theoretical question, one ought to simply attack the adversary's claim by showing how God's inexistence cannot be proven. One does not need to provide the positive although only practically valid reasons to hold God's existence. For, if one were to do this, the result would be disastrous, at least rhetorically speaking. The dogmatist would not desist from holding her dogmatic claims and would consider one's merely practical arguments as a very weak position—that is, she would feel theoretically entitled to continue the dispute or to consider that she has *won* it.

Kant's argument, it seems to me, is highly realistic and impressively liberal: One must weaken the atheist claim in order to defend one's cause. However, one cannot expect that one's practical grounds ought to convince dogmatic minds. In order to bring the atheist to the

conclusion that he/she should believe in the existence of God for practical reasons, one would have to explain first the philosophical presuppositions of one's view. But, Kant insists that this is not the scenario wherein we submit reason to the tribunal of a critique—this is merely the scenario in which we discuss with other citizens, in everyday life. Not to lose the battle and to plant the seeds of doubt in the mind of the dogmatic atheist is a good enough outcome. Proper, enlightened education will hopefully do the rest.[4]

Even though Kant does not give the opposite example, we can suppose that the *non liquet* can also be used against the *dogmatic believer*, i.e., the theist. If one were to omit one's right to *veto* in this case, and only assert one's practical grounds for the belief in the existence of God, the dogmatist would consider one as a weak believer, a sort of "watered down" theist. He/she would feel entitled to further indoctrinate one, feeling superior, both in faith and reason. This attitude only allows the future development of fanaticism and religious intolerance. But using the *veto* whenever the occasion calls for it would be helpful to keep religious enthusiasm in check.

Even with these considerations in mind, Kant's description of the polemical use of reason seems at first sight rather unscrupulous. Moreover, it seems that Kant agrees on the moral dubiousness of the strategy but justifies it on the grounds of its eventual utility:

> For what can be more disadvantageous to insight than falsely communicating even mere thoughts, than *concealing doubts which we feel about our own assertions*, or giving a semblance of self evidence to grounds of proof which do not satisfy ourselves? ... But where the public holds that subtle dialecticians are after nothing else than to shake the foundation of the public welfare, then it seems not only prudent but also permissible and even creditable to come to the aid of the good

[4] Kant also argues that, in regards to the education of the youth, such thorny subjects as God's existence and the immortality of soul should not be kept hidden. Even if at first the debate would bewilder the students, and perhaps bring them to uncritical skepticism, in the long run, when they are educated in critical philosophy, they would be able to consider the claims in their proper light: "… it is absolutely necessary to direct the attacks that would be so fearsome for the dogmatist against the reason of the student, which is still weak but is enlightened by critique, and allow him to make the experiment of examining the groundless assertions of his opponents one by one in light of this principles. It cannot be difficult for him to dissolve those arguments into thin air…" (A755/B783).

> cause with spurious grounds rather than to give its putative enemies even the advantage of lowering our voice to the modesty of a merely practical conviction and necessitating us to admit the lack of speculative and apodictic certainty (A747/B775-A749/B777).

Kant insists here on the moral importance of not losing ground to the dogmatic atheist. The "modesty of a mere practical conviction" will never convince him. Therefore, the practical believer ought to act as an orator who, conscious of the spuriousness of his own arguments, still furthers his claims with complete assuredness.

At some point of the argument, Kant directly addresses the practical believer as if wanting to persuade him of the moral utility of the polemical strategy. The following paragraph is worth examining in detail:

> Now, what is to be done, especially in regard to the danger, which seems to threaten the common good from this quarter? Nothing is more natural, nothing more equitable than the decision that you have to make. Let these people do what they want; if they exhibit talent, if they exhibit deep and new research, in a word, if only they exhibit reason, then reason always wins. If you use means other than unconcerned reason, if you cry high treason, if you call together the public, which understands nothing of such subtle refinements, as if they were to put out a fire, then you make yourself ridiculous. For the issue is not what is advantageous or disadvantageous to the common good in these matters, but only how far reason can get in its speculation in abstraction from all interest, and whether one can count on such speculation at all or must rather give it up in favor of the practical. Thus, instead of charging with a sword, you should watch this conflict peaceably from the safe seat of the critique, a conflict which must be exhausting for the combatants but entertaining for you, with an outcome that will certainly be bloodless and advantageous for your insight (A746/B774-A747/B775).

Kant uses many rhetorical devices in this paragraph. First, he exhorts the reader to act with moral assuredness: "...Nothing is more natural, nothing more equitable than the decision that *you* have to make..." Second, he uses a rhetorical figure of speech, called a *tricolon*, which is classically used in perorations, i.e., the last part of the discourse, where the orator's intent is to move the emotions of the audience to persuade it to adopt a certain course of action. The *tricolon* consists

in repeating one idea in three different ways, while conserving some formal elements of the first phrase. It aims at making the idea more vivid and at affecting the audience's imagination and emotions.

Kant employs the *tricolon* twice: the first time, he uses it to describe the attitude of the dogmatist: "…Let these people do what they want; *if they exhibit* talent, *if they exhibit* deep and new research, in a word, *if only they exhibit* reason…" Immediately after this, he uses de device again in order to describe the attitude that the practical believer must avoid: "*If you* use means other than unconcerned reason, *if you* cry high treason, *if you* call together the public… you make yourself ridiculous."[5]

At the end of the paragraph, Kant exhorts the practical believer once again, this time using a vivid metaphor of the situation: "instead of charging with a sword, you should watch this conflict peaceably from the safe seat of the critique..." And finally, Kant stresses the emotions that the practical believer should have throughout the dispute: "...a conflict which must be exhausting for the combatants but entertaining for you, with an outcome that will certainly be bloodless and advantageous for your insight."

From this analysis, it can be concluded that the practical considerations of the enlightened individual for holding the existence of God and the immortality of the soul are too weak for polemical purposes. They are, in other words, not good enough rhetorical arguments, insofar as they make visible their own weakness—the underlying theoretical doubt. Therefore, Kant advises to this practical believer to adopt a stronger attitude when entering the dispute. According to Kant, one (as practical believer) ought to act *as if* holding a theoretical belief. In this sense, he recommends the approach of a lawyer or orator, who, even if knowing that the

[5] It is interesting that Kant uses this rhetorical device that is envisaged to move the emotions of the audience, precisely in order to convince the practical believer not to use means different than rational arguments! Kant is definitely a better orator than he wants to admit.

views he holds are merely probable, presents them as if they were true. The motive behind this attitude is not moral wickedness, but rather the fact that once one has acknowledged the intrinsic fallibility of human reason, all one can do in the public sphere is to advance claims polemically, so as to bring the dogmatist to "self-knowledge." As practical believer, one does not want to convert the atheist into a theist. One only opposes the grounds of the atheist in order to shake his dogmatic assuredness.

However, this attitude is not easy to adopt. It seems at first glance immoral, and, thus, Kant himself must resort to a rhetorical strategy in order to persuade the practical believer of acting as an orator. This is, indeed, a paradoxical outcome. Why does Kant, with all his qualms about rhetoric, assume this role? Is Kant's position really unscrupulous or does Kant have sufficient reasons to advise this behavior?

In the *Canon of Pure Reason*, Kant expounds the characteristics of a practical belief. Perhaps if we examine these features in more detail we can understand better why Kant recommends so forcefully to, as it were, "hide" this belief or "mask" it with a stronger, dogmatic one.

3. **The Canon of Pure Reason: Practical Reasons to Hold Metaphysical Beliefs**

In the dynamical antinomies, Kant had discussed the speculative question of the existence of freedom as an intelligible cause and God as a necessary being. Kant did not discuss the problem of the immortality of soul, which rather belonged to the "Paralogisms of Pure Reason." However, these three questions—whether there is freedom, whether God exists, and whether the soul is immortal—are the "cardinal" problems of pure speculative reason. In the "Canon of Pure Reason," Kant explains the grounds that we humans have to believe in a positive answer to these questions.

These grounds are merely practical. The reasons we have to believe, for example, that God exists are not speculative or theoretical. As the resolution of the antinomies had shown, we have no theoretical knowledge that this is the case. We are only entitled to theoretically assert that the existence of God is "plausible." However, Kant argues in the "Canon" that, even though the theoretical grounds to hold the existence of God are not enough, we have *practical* reasons to believe in God:

> … if there is to be any legitimate use of pure reason at all, in which case there must be a canon of it, this will concern not the speculative but rather the practical use of reason, which we will therefore now investigate (A797/B825).

In the following sections I will examine the practical reasons that one has, according to Kant, to hold each one of the cardinal propositions of pure reason—namely, the existence of freedom, the immortality of the soul, and the existence of God.

3.1. *Practical and Transcendental Freedom*

Kant's opinion concerning freedom is not completely parallel to his treatment of the other two cardinal problems (i.e., God's existence and the immortality of the soul). In the "Canon," Kant makes a distinction between "practical freedom" and "transcendental freedom." He argues that, while the latter is and will always remain "a problem of reason" (that is, reason will never be able to determine positively whether there is transcendental freedom), the former is usually "empirically presupposed" (A801/B829). Kant defines freedom, from the practical point of view, as the faculty of choice that "can be determined independently of sensory impulses, thus through motives that can only be represented by reason…" (A802/B830). In other words, practical freedom is understood as the faculty of choice in virtue of which human beings are able to overcome the impulses of their faculty of desire and set rational ends to themselves. Freedom in this sense, Kant argues, "can be proved through experience" (A802/B830). With this, in my

view, Kant is referring to a common phenomenon involved in our moral judgments—the fact that the common understanding tacitly acknowledges freedom in its imputation of moral responsibility. As a matter of fact, when someone is judged to have acted immorally or to have violated a law, responsibility is imputed on the basis that this person could have acted otherwise. She could have set aside her inclinations and chose to act in accordance with moral or legal duty. Since this person was free, in this sense, but still acted in accordance with her inclinations, we condemn both her behavior and her character.[6] Practically, thus, we "presuppose" the existence of freedom—that is, we take it as a "fact of experience."[7]

However, from a transcendental point of view, freedom, as an *intelligible* cause of phenomena that is not caused by anything else, is still problematic:

> We thus cognize practical reason through experience, as one of the natural causes, namely a causality of reason in the determination of the will, whereas the transcendental freedom requires an independence of this reason itself (…) from all determining causes of the world of the senses, and to this extent seems to be contrary to the law of nature, thus to all possible experience, and so remains a problem (A803/B831).

Since Kant does not tell us more of this "transcendental freedom" in the "Canon," we can resort to a later work to find his more definitive answer on the issue, i.e., the *Critique of Practical Reason.* There, Kant argues that transcendental freedom, as well as the other two cardinal problems (the existence of God and the immortality of soul), ought to be "postulated."

By postulates of reason, Kant understands

> (…) not theoretical dogmas but *presuppositions* having a necessary practical reference and thus, although they do not indeed extend speculative cognition, they give objective reality to the ideas

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[6] This is discussed in the section "Critical Elucidation of the Analytic of Pure Practical Reason" of the *Critique of Pure Practical Reason*, 5:89-106.

[7] Kemp Smith claims that Kant disposes of the problem of freedom in this section. He says: "Freedom is a demonstrated fact, and in this respect differs from the ideas of God and immortality which are merely problematic conceptions, and can be postulated only as articles of 'practical faith.'" N. Kemp Smith, *A Commentary*, 574.

> of speculative reason in general (by means of their reference to what is practical) and justify its holding concepts even the possibility of which it could not otherwise presume to affirm (*CPPR,* 5:132, Kant's emphasis).

That "transcendental freedom" ought to be postulated means that, even though it cannot be considered as knowledge and, thus, it should never be held as a dogma, it ought to be presupposed as a condition of the possibility of moral judgments. For only by assuming transcendental freedom as the *necessary ground* of practical freedom can moral judgments be made and responsibility be imputed. Otherwise, whenever we were to make a moral judgment, the trap of the third antinomy could reappear—e.g., is the murderer really responsible for the crime committed? Or rather, are this person's actions causally determined *ad infinitum*? It is true, as Kant argued in the "Canon," that we tend to consider practical freedom as a fact of experience, and the antinomy of freedom does not hunt the common understanding all too often. However, reason's illusion can always arise, and thus, it is necessary that practical freedom be founded in the presupposition of a transcendental freedom, for only the latter can stop the speculative ascent of reason to previous causes *ad infinitum*. In other words, it is because we presuppose transcendental freedom that practical freedom is the ground of our everyday moral judgments.

3.2. *Immortality of Soul and Existence of God as Grounds for Human Happiness*

The other two cardinal problems of pure reason—whether God exists and the soul is immortal—are answered in a very different manner. According to Kant, the practical grounds we have to believe in these two latter metaphysical claims are more complex than those we have to believe in freedom—namely, the very possibility of moral imputation. These latter beliefs rather obtain their practical justification through the idea of happiness.

In the "Canon," Kant argues that reason is naturally (that is, universally) interested in answering three questions: "What can I know?", "What should I do?", and "What may I hope?"

The third question involves the human natural longing for happiness. We can translate it as "do I have the right to hope for happiness?"

Happiness is defined by Kant as the "satisfaction of all our inclinations" (A806/B834). In this sense, happiness involves not only a state of life that I can bring about by my own means, but also a state in which nature and other individuals have much to contribute. Even if I act prudently—i.e., if I set my ends, rationally choose the best means to attain them, and act accordingly—I would not be *completely* happy.[8] Prudence would certainly bring about an important amount of happiness to my life, but since some inclinations actually require external participation in order to be fulfilled, I would not be happy without the concord of other people and of physical circumstances. Hence, the question is not whether I can hope to attain the kind of happiness that I may bring about by my own means, but rather whether I can hope to ever attain the happiness that would derive from environmental and societal optimal conditions.

This second aspect of happiness—the happiness that is attained by the concord of a community or society—necessarily involves a system of morality. Morality, paradoxically, limits one's own satisfaction of inclinations in order that everyone may have a share of it. Therefore, wishing for happiness involves necessarily wishing that everyone, including oneself, acts morally. A world of moral agents would be a happy (or happier) world:

> Now, in an intelligible world, i.e., in the moral world…, such a system of happiness proportionately combined with morality can also be thought as necessary, since freedom, partly moved and partly restricted by moral laws, would itself be the cause of the general happiness, and rational beings, under the guidance of such principles, would themselves be the authors of their own enduring welfare and at the same time of the others (A808/B836).

[8] This is Kant's "doctrine of prudence." Prudence advises us what we ought to do "if we want to partake in happiness." But it is not enough to be happy. We must also *deserve* to be happy, that is, follow the moral law (A806/B834).

According to Kant, reason naturally leads us to the idea of this intelligible world in which the systems of happiness and of morality are perfectly interrelated. This idea, even though a construction of reason in its speculative activity, has practical "objectivity":

> Thus far it is therefore a mere, yet practical idea, which really can and should have its influence on the sensible world, in order to make it agree as far as possible with this idea. The idea of a moral world thus has objective reality, not as if it pertained to an object of intelligible intuition (for we cannot even think of such thing), but as pertaining to the sensible world, although as an object of pure reason in its practical use… (A808/B836).

That the idea of a moral world has practical "objective reality" means that it is essential for practical purposes. This idea works practically as an incentive to moral action. If happiness did not coincide in this way with morality, we would not have any other incentive to act in accordance with duty than our feeling of respect for the moral law.

However, the motivating force of this idea of the moral world is still not enough to warrant moral action. First, since the moral world depends on so many wills, the most probable outcome is that no matter how much effort is spent in moral education, such a state of moral perfection will never be attained by the human kind. Second, even if all human beings were to act morally, the "satisfaction of all our inclinations" could be thwarted by physical circumstances, such as lack of resources or even natural disasters. This aspect of happiness, which depends on a fortunate agreement between our desires and nature's phenomena, is not attainable by means of human moral determination. As a result, we can be discouraged easily in moral matters and decide to further the more immediate satisfaction of our inclinations by wicked means. For, if we cannot hope that happiness be granted to us in a future moral world, why after all should we restrain ourselves from obtaining as much satisfaction as we can in this world?

In Kant's view, the only way we can resolve this problem is by appealing to the beliefs in the existence of God and in the immortality of the soul. If we believe that God rewards our

moral behavior in this life by granting us the state of absolute happiness in another life, then we can be reassured in our moral efforts:

> … since we must necessarily represent ourselves through reason as belonging to such a world [the moral world]… we must assume the moral world to be a consequence of our conduct in the sensible world; and since the latter does not offer such a connection to us, we must assume the former to be a world that is future for us. Thus *God and a future life* are two presuppositions that are not to be separated from the obligation that pure reason imposes on us, in accordance with principles of that very same reason (A811/B839).

These beliefs are highly useful for practical purposes. Rewards and threats are to be expected by individuals for whom respect for duty alone is not incentive enough for moral action. However, Kant's argument is not just pragmatic or utilitarian. He does not claim that these beliefs are to be held merely in view of their usefulness as practical incentives. Kant considers that these beliefs are "practically necessary." It is true that they function as incentives to moral action, but not in the sense of an empirical incentive, i.e., one that can either be present or absent from moral deliberation. Rather, they are part of what is at stake in any moral decision. Without these beliefs, Kant says,

> ... reason sees itself as compelled ... to regard the moral laws as empty figments of the brain, since without that presupposition their necessary success... would have to disappear. ... Hence everyone also regards the moral laws as commands... This however, they could not do if they did not lie in a necessary being, and the highest good, which alone can make possible such purposive unity (A811/B839-A812/B840).

It is not that we can play at will with these beliefs and choose whether or not to use them in order to convince ourselves and others to act morally. Rather, moral duty would not have its abiding power were it not for the fact that speculative reason creates the ideas of God and the immortality of the soul. We would consider moral action as an admirable behavior, appropriate to saints or sages, but not as our duty. But reason takes us to the contemplation of these ideas

that, even though speculatively deceptive, find their justification in morality. Kant believes that the real vocation of the ideas of reason is practical:

> ... there must somewhere be a source of positive cognitions that belong in the domain of pure reason, and that... in fact constitute the goal of the strenuous effort of reason. For to what cause should the unquenchable desire to find a firm footing beyond all bounds of experience otherwise be ascribed? Pure reason has a presentiment of objects of great interest to it. It takes the path of mere speculation in order to come closer to these, but they flee before it. Presumably it may hope for better luck on the only path that still remains to it, namely that of its *practical* use (A796/B824, Kant's emphasis).

Metaphysical truths are not reachable by the human intellect. Human reason in its speculative use attempts to catch a glimpse of them, but fails. However, the ideas that reason invents in its metaphysical flight are not just "figments of the brain." They have a practical usefulness and significance. Hence, the belief in the existence of God and the immortality of soul are necessary beliefs. They are not *theoretically necessary* (they do not constitute knowledge) but they are *practically necessary* (they make possible moral action).

In the *Critique of Practical Reason* (*CPPR*, 5:122-133), Kant considers these beliefs, as well the belief in freedom, as "postulates" of reason. He argues that the necessity attached to these beliefs is *moral* (i.e., practical) and *subjective*. He calls them "pure rational beliefs" because they are produced by speculative reason but serve the purposes of practical reason:

> It is well to note here that this moral necessity [of the presupposition of the existence of God and the immortality of the soul] is subjective, that is, a need, and not objective, that is, itself a duty; for there can be no duty to assume the existence of anything (since this concerns only the theoretical use of reason). … in relation to the intelligibility of an object given to us by the moral law… [this presupposition] can be called a belief (*Glaube*), and indeed a pure rational belief since pure reason alone (in its theoretical as well as in its practical use) is the source from which it springs *(CPPR,* 5:125-126).

But, what does it mean psychologically to hold a "postulate of reason" or a "subjectively necessary belief"? How is that different from holding an objectively necessary belief, namely, knowledge? In the third section of the "Canon," entitled "On having an Opinion, Knowing and Believing," Kant explains better the nature of these practically necessary but merely subjective beliefs.

Opinion, belief and knowledge are stages in "taking something to be true." The grounds or reasons to take something to be true are either objective or subjective. In the case of knowledge, the grounds for holding something to be true are both subjectively and objectively sufficient. In the case of belief, they are sufficient subjectively but insufficient objectively, and, in opinions, they are both subjectively and objectively insufficient (A822/B850).

Metaphysical claims, as has been demonstrated in the "Dialectic," never have valid objective grounds. Theoretically speaking, it is illegitimate to hold these claims as opinions or as beliefs, let alone as knowledge. From a theoretical point of view, we rather ought to suspend judgment on these questions:

> In the transcendental use of reason... to have an opinion is of course too little, but to know is also too much. In a merely speculative regard, therefore, we cannot judge at all, for subjective grounds for taking something to be true, such as those that can produce belief, deserve no approval in speculative questions... (A823/B851).

But practically, metaphysical claims can be taken to be true on the basis of a *subjective* conviction or assuredness and be either beliefs (if the conviction is strong) or opinions (if it is weak): "Only in a *practical relation*... can taking something that is theoretically insufficient to be true called believing" (A823/B851, Kant's emphasis). The claims about God's existence and the immortality of soul pertain to the class of practical beliefs. Kant calls them also "moral beliefs." They can never be mere opinions—that is, we cannot have the slightest subjective doubt concerning them because morality relies on them:

> For it is absolutely necessary that... I fulfill the moral law in all points. The end here is inescapably fixed, and according to all my insight there is possible only a single condition under which this end is consistent with all ends altogether and thereby has practical validity, namely, that there be a God, and a future world (A828/B856).

Thus, these beliefs have not only subjectively *sufficient* grounds but also subjectively *necessary* grounds. One's morality would be "subverted" if they were to be doubted (A828/B856). Accordingly, Kant considers that, since this state of conviction is so strong, we can call it "subjective moral certainty" and express it with the formula "I am morally certain that..." (A829/B857).[9]

In sum, Kant considers that believing in the existence of God and the immortality of the soul is a necessary incentive for moral action. In order to act morally, one must necessarily believe that one may become worthy of a state of happiness in a future life guaranteed by God. To simply "opine" that this could be the case is not enough because a mere opinion would not have the necessary motivating force.

But, is it in fact necessary to presuppose such metaphysical claims in order to act morally? Is not Kant here simply introducing a *deux ex machina* to make his argument more cohesive or to legitimate his own religious beliefs? Since in the *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals*, Kant considers our feeling of respect for the moral law as the *only valid incentive* to moral action,[10] why does he introduce here a belief in otherworldly rewards as necessary incentives?

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[9] Of course, Kant is here not using the term "certainty" in relation to objectivity. Were this the case, the corresponding formula would be "It is morally certain that..." What Kant wants to convey with the term "certainty" is only that to this subjective and practical belief corresponds the highest possible degree of assuredness.

[10] In the *Groundwork,* moral action is only rightfully motivated by respect for the moral law: "… duty is the necessity of an action from respect for law. … Now, an action from duty is to put aside entirely the influence of inclination and with it every object of the will; hence there is left for the will nothing that could determine it except objectively the law and subjectively pure respect for this practical law…" (*GW*, 4:401).

Kant, in fact, is not introducing a *deux ex machina* in his argument. He has other motives to consider these metaphysical beliefs as practically necessary. First, Kant would not be able justify reason's natural inclination to go beyond the limits of experience, if it were not for the fact that the metaphysical ideas of reason have some practical utility. Second, Kant wants to justify religious beliefs *on the basis of* morality and not the other way around. The attitude of dogmatically believing in God and deriving morality from such a speculative idea (i.e., a real *deux ex machina*) is unacceptable for Kant. Not only would it amount to founding morality on a spurious basis (since knowledge of God is unattainable), but it would also involve a heteronomous understanding of the moral law (as coming from an external command).[11] Third, acting morally only out of respect for the moral law is the ideal, most perfect, moral disposition—i.e., the characteristic of a "good will." But Kant was aware of the Stoic tone of this ideal.[12] Most people simply do not have such a strong character as to act morally while at the same time holding with subjective assuredness the impossibility of a moral and happy world. Therefore, it is actually the case that it makes sense to most human beings to practically believe in God's existence and in the immortality of soul, even if theoretically they still doubt it.

That one is not (and can never be) certain of the impossibility of God's existence is sufficient ground to motivate one to hold such practical beliefs:

> For to this end [to be motivated by the promise of future happiness], nothing more is required than that he at least cannot pretend to any certainty that there is no such being and no future life,

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[11] For an account of the belief in God as an external material determining ground of morality, i.e., as a heteronomous ground, see Kant, *CPPR*, 5:33 to 5:42.

[12] In *CPPR* 5:126-127, Kant refers to the Stoic moral ideal: "The Stoics (…) had chosen their supreme practical principle quite correctly, namely virtue, as the condition of the highest good; but inasmuch as they represented the degree of virtue required by its pure law as fully attainable in this life, they not only strained the moral capacity of the human being, under the name of a *sage*, far beyond all the limits of his nature (…), but also and above all, they would not let the second component of the highest good, namely happiness, hold as a special object of the human faculty of desire, but made their sage (…) quite independent of nature (in respect to his own contentment)…"

> which would have to be proved through reason alone and thus apodictically since he would have to establish them to be impossible, which certainly no rational being can undertake to do (A830/B858).

Most human beings, with sufficient moral disposition and critical capacity to realize that the existence or inexistence of God cannot be proved, would easily hold the practically motivated belief that God exists and will reward our moral efforts with a future life of unrestricted happiness. This is, for Kant, a universal characterization. It is not that people who hold these practical beliefs are simply naive or intellectually lazy, but rather that these beliefs are practically necessary given the *a priori* structures of human reason.

To be sure, some human beings may be morally disposed in such a way that they do not need metaphysical incentives. Perhaps (but paradoxically) the modern prototype of these human beings is the moral atheist—who holds both God's inexistence and the necessity of acting morally. Either this atheist reenacts in some way the Stoic doctrine that happiness is equal to moral worth (and thus, for this person, to be virtuous is to be happy), or he is committed to the more existentialist view that happiness is just not worth striving for. To him, holding metaphysical beliefs for practical reasons would be just an uncommitted attitude. Be it as it may, the fact remains that for most human beings these metaphysical beliefs are practically necessary.

With this in mind, we can go back to the first section of this chapter where I examined Kant's assertion that in the public arena, the practical believer should argue against the atheist on equally dogmatic terms. We saw how this attitude involved a sort of unscrupulous behavior, and how Kant himself seemed to have qualms concerning it. Why should not one, as a practical believer, express one's own theoretical doubts and affirm that one's beliefs are only the result of practical considerations? First, I had argued, because everyone has the right to possess her opinions. Second, because this humble position would, as it were, bring the (a)theist to the

unfounded conclusion that her beliefs have objective validity. But there is still one more consideration. To show one's theoretical doubts about these metaphysical claims would amount to holding them just as "opinions." Affirming that God exists while acknowledging at the time that the contrary could still be the case is equal to saying: "in *my* opinion, God exists." But the fact is, Kant argues, that the practical believer does not just "opine" that God exists but has subjective certainty on the matter. To just "opine" that God may exist does not convey the force of a practical belief. Therefore, when one (the practical believer) finds oneself entangled in a metaphysical dispute, one is to show the strength of one's conviction, and the best way to do this is by adhering to the theoretical arguments that support one's belief.

Kant's claim is not that one should disguise one's mere opinion on these matters under the mask of a strong dogmatic belief. His view is rather that, even if one's belief is not theoretical, one would not do justice to it by presenting it as a mere opinion. On the other hand, to present one's belief in these disputes as what it really is (a practical belief) and to try to convince the opponent of its validity would entail too much theoretical preparation. First, the opponent would have to be persuaded of the theoretical undecidability of the claim (he would have to be shown the antinomical dialectic of reason) and second, he ought to be convinced of the moral necessity involved in holding the belief. In other words, the practical believer would have to instruct her opponent in critical philosophy. Since in the public arena this cannot be done, the practical believer ought to, at least, convince the dogmatic atheist that her (the latter's) position is, in fact, shakable, and hence, unjustifiable. In order to do this, the practical believer is forced to hold God's existence as a *theoretical* belief.

4. Ciceronian Assent and Approval in Kant's Practical Beliefs

In Cicero's *Academica*, the problem of how to act in the face of uncertainty had been given a solution. Cicero argued that the skeptic sage would withhold assent to any proposition, in view of its constitutive undecidability. In turn, once it has been demonstrated that certainty is impossible, the Stoic sage would not be able to believe in anything either, since he would never give his assent to mere probabilities. Cicero solved the problem by distinguishing between "assent" and "approval." The sage can approve certain propositions in order to be able to act on their basis without having to theoretically believe them or give his "assent" to them. I argued in Chapter II that the difference between assent and approval can be understood in terms of having a belief or holding an opinion.[13] The fallibilist sage, accordingly, is wary of beliefs but holds opinions in order to conduct life in all practical matters.

Now, Kant characterization in the "Canon" of the attitude one should hold in regard to metaphysical claims shares the spirit of Ciceronian fallibilism. How is the sage or, in Kant's view, the enlightened individual to act considering the constitutive uncertainty of metaphysical beliefs? Once it has been shown in the antinomies that *theoretically speaking* both the existence and the inexistence of God are equally plausible, on the basis of which proposition should the enlightened individual act?

Kant answers that the enlightened individual should embrace the proposition that Gods exists for purely practical purposes. But, is this to "assent" to the proposition or to "approve" it? When the enlightened individual holds the existence of God for merely practical purposes, she does not "assent" to it, but only gives her "approval." Cicero had characterized assent as theoretical—i.e., as the psychological state that accompanies a judgment of the sort "things *are* this way." Therefore, the enlightened individual does not give her assent to the proposition "God exists." But we can say that she does give her approval, for he could, in fact, say, "It

[13] Chapter II, pp. 68-69.

appears to me that God exists." More importantly, she acts on the basis of this proposition—that is, she is motivated to act morally by the promise of a happy world, which God in His benevolence would grant to her as a reward in a future life.

Now, does this mean that the enlightened individual only holds the opinion that God exists? As we just argued, this cannot be the case. As a practical believer, one does not hold God's existence as a mere opinion but as a belief of which one is subjectively certain. One approves the proposition for practical purposes but gives a rather strong approval to it. One's approval is so strong that one is willing to make it pass for assent in metaphysical disputes.

Now, does this conclusion commit us to consider Cicero's theory as flawed? I think not. It commits us rather to propose a more detailed gradation of "approval." Approval can correspond to three sorts of judgments, namely, *theoretical opinion*, *practical belief*, and *practical opinion*. We act on the basis of *practical opinion* when we "bet" that such and such will be the outcome of a practical decision.[14] However, when it comes to moral action, practical opinion is too weak. In those cases, we act on the basis of a *practical belief*. Some examples may help to clarify this point. In prudential matters, if I want to buy a new detergent for my kitchen floor, I may follow the theoretical and practical *opinion* that chlorine-based detergents are better than ammonia-based ones. I "bet" that this is the case and buy a chlorine-based detergent. I may then realize that the contrary opinion is more accurate, both theoretically and practically, and change my course of action. But in the case of moral action, mere practical opinion is not good enough. When it comes to deciding on morally crucial points as, for instance, whether euthanasia is a better option than vegetative life, it is not enough to have a mere practical opinion (the question of having theoretical certainty is here beside the point). I would never "bet" on an issue like that. I

[14] "The usual touchstone of whether what someone asserts is mere persuasion [opinion] or t least subjective conviction, i.e. firm belief, is betting" (A824/B852).

must wholeheartedly believe that euthanasia is better in order to decide to administer it to a relative. Hence, practical belief is still based on mere "approval," but this approval is much stronger than the one involved in practical opinion.

Recapitulating, in this chapter I aimed to show how Kant, in the "Doctrine of Method," gives the rules to the legitimate use of reason in metaphysical issues. He gives negative rules in his "Discipline of Pure Reason," as well as positive rules in his "Canon of Pure Reason." One of the negative rules concerns the use of reason in public disputes, that is, the polemical use of reason. There, Kant argues that we ought to employ theoretically dogmatic claims only as *vetos* or *arguments ad hominem* in order to bring the dogmatic atheist to the realization of her own doubts concerning the inexistence of God. The positive rules involve the use of metaphysical claims for practical matters. Here, holding practical beliefs in the existence of God and the immortality of soul becomes necessary in order to motivate moral action. I, then, compared these practical beliefs with Cicero's argument about the two psychological states that accompany judgment—assent and approval. I, thus, hold that even if in Ciceronian terms approval is related only to holding opinions, we can say that when it comes to moral issues, approval can also be very strong, and it can correspond to what Kant calls a "practically necessary belief."

Final Remarks

After having examined the influence of Cicero's fallibilist doctrine in Kant's critique of metaphysics, I would like to make some remarks about the scope and importance of these reflections. These remarks may be grouped into two headings. The first one concerns the scope of application of Kant's idea of a "practical belief," or a "postulate of reason." The second deals with the general project of finding a connection between the epistemological position that rhetoric entails and some aspects of modern philosophy.

1. **Kant's Practical Belief**

I would like to begin with a personal anecdote. A few years ago, I was having dinner with my husband and a good friend of mine. My husband is an open atheist and my friend an equally open Catholic; and consequently, most of the dinnertime was devoted to a discussion concerning the validity of religious beliefs. My friend brought up the issue by bluntly asking my husband: "How can you be an atheist and at the same time behave responsibly? If I did not believe in God, I would never wake up early to go to my job, be faithful to my wife, or take responsibility for my children. I would party all my life." My husband answered that God's existence was not provable, so he preferred not to believe in it, and he expressed his conviction that morality in modern times should be secular. The discussion went on, without reaching closure.

What struck me the most about this discussion was not their arguments to support their corresponding belief and lack of belief in God respectively, but the practical outcome that my friend thought would necessarily ensue from adopting one particular stance. I had never thought

that religious faith could arise from a preoccupation about moral responsibility! Rather, I thought that it naturally arose from sentiment or traditional upbringing. But my friend believes in God *so that* he can act responsibly in moral matters, and not the other way around. Believing in God allows him to, as it were, *convince himself* of the importance of acting in accordance with moral duty. It is not the case, however, that my friend has a vicious temperament and needs a strong external force to restrain him from acting immorally. My friend is actually what we usually call "an average good person." He has the respect for the moral law required to act dutifully, he *knows* that behaving responsible is the right thing to do, but he needs to believe in God in order to fully bring himself to the state of mind required to overcome his immoral inclinations. The issue is that his tendency to act morally seems to be as strong as his tendency to act immorally. We could say that he has an *akratic,* or incontinent temperament, but not a *vicious* one. His belief in God helps him to resolve the tension and to let the side of his moral inclinations win the battle over the immoral ones.

My friend's attitude is a good characterization of what Kant considers to be the enlightened stance concerning religious beliefs. Somehow Kant thinks that behaving like my friend is proper for an autonomous modern agent. My friend has a "practical belief" in the existence of God. It is possible that his practical belief is also accompanied by some sort of feeling of connection with the absolute, but this is not the definitive motivating force of his faith. Rather, he claims to have *reasons that justify* his belief in God—reasons that are fundamentally practical. However, his belief in a rewarded future happy life is not the *basis* of his morality. He does not act morally *in order to attain* a divine reward or to avoid adivine punishment. If this was the case, my friend's morality would be heteronomous. Rather, my friend acts morally because of his own respect for moral duty, but in those moments in which he feels his immoral inclinations to be too strong, the hope in a deserved future happy life works as a further incentive for his morality.

My husband, in contrast, characterizes a more radical, but still enlightened view. Paradoxically, his view shares more with the Stoic idea that morality is to be chosen by itself, without metaphysical or religious incentives. In this sense, he seems to be more in agreement with the Kant of the *Groundwork* than with the Kant of the first and second *Critiques*. However, he not only denies that God exists but also disagrees with the idea that happiness should be hoped for, in this life or in other, as a reward for our moral efforts. Of course, if he were a real Stoic, he would identify happiness with virtue and consider it achievable in this life, but being rather a modern Hobbesian, he believes that happiness has to do with (as Kant defines it) "the satisfaction of all our inclinations." Since to satisfy all our inclinations would necessarily involve acting immorally, for him, happiness is simply not to be expected.

Being good friends, the discussion between my friend and my husband was civil and did not involve dogmatic attempts to convince any of the parties involved. It was not, as Kant would call it, "a polemical discussion," but only an exchange of points of view. Therefore, my friend did not feel obliged to mask his merely practical motivation with a dogmatic one, as Kant advises us to do in polemical scenarios. Rather, he could express openly his theoretical qualms about God's existence, and his practical motivation for endorsing his belief. Neither did my husband try to convince him of the inexistence of God. Not holding a dogmatic belief in this respect either, he was respectful of my friend's practical motivation and recognized as valid his grounds to believe in God.

For my part, I do not hold God's existence for its practical consequences, as my friend does. Neither am I am a moral-atheist, as we could call my husband's position. But I do find both positions valuable in themselves, and I appreciate them both more than the attitude of a traditional, dogmatic believer, who holds God's existence theoretically and derives morality from his religious commitments.

This brings to my mind another anecdote. As a graduate student, I was once engaged in an argument with a fellow student who held the existence of God (most precisely, of Jesus Christ as incarnated God) dogmatically. I told him that I somehow believed in God but I could not claim certainty about my religious beliefs. He argued, not without some reason, that believing something meant *holding some state of affairs to be true*. In other words, he held that for a belief to be so it necessarily had to be theoretical. It could be objectively or subjectively held (i.e., with sufficient or insufficient grounds), but it needed to be about "something out there," something that was or was not the case. He accused me of being a "watered-down" Christian and of holding just a mere opinion on the issue. Perhaps my fellow student was right, and I am just, as Cicero claimed of himself, "an opinionated person"—not consequent at all with my religious commitments. Perhaps I do not have religious commitments after all. A dogmatic atheist could also accuse me of this inconsistency and claim that I am just a sort of "atheist in the closet." But as a matter of fact, I do not feel committed to the belief in the inexistence of God and the mortality of the soul. Fear of death? It could be. I don't know.

In contrast to the first discussion (between my friend and my husband), the second one (between my fellow student and me) did have a polemical character. My fellow student wanted to convince me of the necessity of making up my mind… or my heart. He said that I needed to either hold with rational certainty that God existed or did not exist, or make a "leap of faith," and let my religious feelings solidify in spite of my rational doubts. For some reason, the discussion left me with a bad taste in my mouth—I felt somehow attacked both in my intelligence and my free will.

Now, the important philosophical issue exemplified in these anecdotes is, in my view, the very modern realization that given the natural fallibility of our reason, many of our beliefs are adopted for *rational grounds, which are however different from theoretical certainty*. In the face of the

modern critique of metaphysics, which has permeated all domains of life, what sorts of beliefs can we *legitimately and rationally* hold? Kant's answer is that we are allowed to hold those beliefs whose practical consequences are in agreement with moral autonomy. Both my friend and my husband's beliefs are of this sort, but my fellow student's are not.

A dogmatic theoretical belief in God leads to moral heteronomy. As my fellow student argued, this type of belief can only be held for two reasons: *theoretical certainty*, as a theist who claims that it is possible to know that God exists, and thus, prove it speculatively (in the fashion of medieval Thomism or seventeenth-century rationalism); or *subjective feeling*, as a fideist, who claims that sentiment (or revelation and grace) is strong enough evidence that God exists. Both approaches would necessarily involve the heteronomous derivation of morality from religion. To put it in the words of the most famous fideist, Michel de Montaigne: "The first law that God ever gave to men is the law of pure obedience. …From obeying and yielding arises all virtue, while from thinking arises all sin."[1] This consequence of holding religious beliefs dogmatically and following moral law from blind obedience to God's precepts is, needless to say, at odds with Kant's enlightened project.

However, Kant's stance, that religious beliefs are to be held for practical reasons, still appears to be very conservative.[2] In fact, it seems as though the moral-atheist's view (my husband's) should be more in agreement with Kant's critique of metaphysics and autonomous morality than the practical believer's (my friend's) view. However, Kant chose this more conservative outlook and allowed religious motives to play a role (even if secondary) in our moral deliberations. Why is this so? Many commentators have claimed that Kant was just more

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[1] Michel de Montaigne, "Apologie de Raimond de Sebonde," in *Essais* (Paris: le Livre de Poche, 2001), p.760 (my translation).

[2] As argued by Frederick Beiser in "Moral Faith and the Highest Good." See Paul Guyer (Ed.) *The Cambridge Companion to Kant and Modern Philosophy* (Cambridge-New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006), pp. 588-629.

committed to his Christian beliefs than we would like to accept. This might be right but I prefer a different explanation. In my view, Kant's conservatism arises from a very realistic understanding of human nature. Few people have the moral-atheist' resoluteness and capacity to despise the very human longing for happiness. Kant considers that even the most enlightened agent sometimes wishes that she were happy, or at least, that he were as happy as she deserved to be. This is a legitimate wish or, in Kant's words, a "rational hope." In contrast, the moral-atheist acts as the empiricist-skeptic who must constantly refrain her reason's speculative inclinations—for the very idea of happiness is an outcome of this speculation. Kant values this skeptic's effort to discipline reason, but does not believe that this attitude should be a requirement for enlightenment. Believing in the possibility of attaining happiness, even if in another life and granted by God, should be a legitimate option—after all, it arises from our human, rational nature.

Summarily, Kant's view that metaphysical beliefs are only justifiable on practical grounds is to be examined with care. It may bring about consequences that perhaps Kant himself (guided by his Christian beliefs) would have not completely endorsed but whose social consequences are essential in our time. We could argue, for example, that following Kant's theory, the Hinduist belief in reincarnation is as justifiable as the Christian belief in a future happy world rewarded by God. The former relies as much as the latter in the two fundamental propositions that Kant considers as practically valid—God's existence and the immortality of the soul. It also furthers a desire to act morally, i.e., to perfect one's human social nature. It is, in sum, as much an incentive as the latter. Taking Kant's theory strictly would therefore entail a tolerant attitude concerning different religious beliefs. If one's belief in future happiness and another's belief in reincarnation are practically motivated, no one should try to convince the other of the theoretical implausibility of the belief.

Moreover, Kant's theory of justification of belief on practical reasons, I think, should be also valid for other kind of metaphysical (i.e., unverifiable by experience) claims. For instance, what justifies our belief in historical progress? No one has the sort of "intellectual intuition" (except, perhaps, Hegel) to be able to assert with absolute certainty that history is in fact an embodiment of reason and involves an intrinsic progression to absolute knowledge and moral perfection. To this belief in historical progress, one could rationally oppose the contrary view, in favor of a historical decline. The antinomy would then arise and, being strictly skeptical, reason would have to remain in perplexity. Kant's answer, once again, would most probably be that we should believe in historical progress, *whenever this belief leads to an improvement of societal conditions*. If the belief, however, is held dogmatically, the consequence again would be heteronomy—this time in the guise of authoritarianism and intolerance (as, for example, in the Nazi idea of racial progress).

These considerations, to be sure, need a more thorough analysis than I have given so far. I believe that a valuable outcome of this dissertation could be a future inquiry into what justifies human's metaphysical beliefs in the context of modern enlightened thought. Even if the postmodern critique seems to have answered the question negatively—by arguing that metaphysical beliefs are to be held on irrational grounds and do not need justification—I consider that there is still much to argue in favor of the ideal of autonomous believing and acting. After all, for some reflective human beings, Socrates' dictum that "an unexamined life is not worth living" still functions as an important guideline. To understand one's own rational possibilities and to attempt to justify one's stance concerning the great questions of human life is still a worthwhile enterprise, not to mention the core of any philosophical undertaking.

Now, in order to give closure to this work, I would like to go back to the issue of the relationship between philosophy and rhetoric.

2. **Rhetoric and the Justification of Belief**

Cicero acknowledged the fallibility of human reason and argued that we should act on the basis of probabilities. This meant fundamentally that all sorts of claims, empirical or metaphysical, should be assessed on their persuasiveness. Following Aristotle, Cicero argued that something is probable, if it is this way for the most part, and if people usually consider it to be so. A "reputable" proposition is to be considered as more probable than a non-reputable one. On the basis of these considerations, Cicero attempted to give philosophical grounding to the practice of rhetoric. Cicero's rhetoric, as I argued before, helped to establish uncertain claims.[3] The forensic or judicial practice of a lawyer or rhetorician relies on the idea that facing issues that we cannot know for sure (e.g., whether X really murdered Y), we must resort to probable, reputable hypotheses (i.e., that X had a motivation to kill Y, that this motivation *usually* leads to violent action, etc.). These hypotheses are necessary to make moral decisions concerning the matter. The same principle of probability and reputability is for Cicero to be applied to metaphysical issues such as the nature of the gods and the immortality of the soul.[4] In other words, philosophical questions, for Cicero, do not differ substantially from practical questions. The philosopher as much as the lawyer deals with uncertainty, and the task of both is to overcome skeptical suspension of belief, giving their approval to a claim in order to promote moral action.

Now, how does this relate to the above-mentioned examples of holding religious beliefs for practical or dogmatic reasons? I think that the modern agent, who has given up metaphysical certainty, approaches these matters as a rhetorician. In this respect, Kant only gives us the

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[3] See: Chapter II, pp. 69-71.

[4] See: Cicero, *De Natura Deorum* I, 13-14; and *Tusculan Disputations*, I, 23.

example of how to rhetorically argue in polemical scenarios, where a dogmatic atheist wants to convince a practical believer of his lack of consistency. How ever, there are other scenarios, and more urgent ones, in which we can find a use for rhetorical strategies in order to justify particular metaphysical claims. Even though Kant seems to think (for reasons that are historically explainable) that atheistic dogmatism is the real threat to enlightened thought, we can argue that in our current global circumstances, the contrary is the case. The discussion I had with my fellow student represents, in my view, a manifestation of the anti-enlightened prejudice in modern times. He wanted to convince me of the necessity of holding dogmatic beliefs, and my uneasiness with the discussion was caused in great part by my (at that moment unconscious) commitment to enlightened autonomy and tolerance. I could have, as Kant seems to advise, masked my rational doubts with the dogmatic attitude of an atheist, in order to shake my fellow student's dogmatism. Since I did not, I clearly lost the battle. A good rhetorician would certainly have had more attuned instincts than mine—he would have defended what he did not completely believe in order to bring about the desired outcome of producing in the contender a more autonomous and tolerant attitude concerning these issues.

In the first discussion (between my friend and my husband), as I mentioned, this was not needed. The reason is that both contenders acknowledge metaphysical uncertainty and *are willing to live with it.* In other words, they are both enlightened moral agents. However, rhetoric in this case also plays an important role. My friend, in fact, needed to *convince himself* of the practical utility of believing in God, in order to overcome his *akratic,* or incontinent, tendencies. This should bring again to our mind Isocrates' insight that rhetoric helps to educate morally. Isocrates considered that practice in rhetorical invention in a youthful stage of life enabled the individual with an important ability to deliberate over moral issues. In other words, he argued that rhetoric was to be internalized, so that the orator could produce arguments to convince himself of the

most plausible and practically useful thesis. Most probably, my friend (who, by the way, happens to be a good lawyer) has unconsciously used his own rhetorical ability in order to arrive to the personal realization that the argument in favor of God's existence is plausible enough and furthers in him the desire to act morally. He adopts the belief, as a result of his internalized rhetorical deliberation.

Even if modern philosophy is in general suspicious of rhetorical activity, I believe that this principle of Ciceronian or Academic rhetoric has widely permeated modern thought. It is interesting that Kant criticized oratory on the grounds that it "precludes the audience's capacity to judge," when, in fact, (as I hope to have been able to show) it greatly helps in the production of autonomous judgment. Rhetorical deliberation allows the moral agent to find the reasons, perhaps only plausible and practically useful, but still *reasons* in order to hold his beliefs. My friend may not have the most laudable character, but he strives for moral autonomy. The same could be said of the moral-atheist (represented above by my husband), who must also convince himself of the practical advisability of acting morally, not in order to gain a future reward, but in order to help in the pursuit of society's goals. Their reasons may be different, but they have in common that neither of their beliefs is held as a dogma—let alone as a metaphysical one.

Rhetoric, thus, understood as an activity of inventing plausible, persuasive arguments, is not contrary to enlightenment but only to *dogmatism*. A dogmatist, in fact, makes a very bad rhetorician because he is unable to recognize the natural inconclusiveness of his arguments. He takes his subjective grounds for objective ones and gives secondary importance to practical and moral incentives. He wants to act as his theoretical convictions demand, without recognizing that metaphysical dogmas (at least in modernity) constitute a very frail foundation.

The history of philosophy tends to deny any possible link with the rhetorical tradition, on the grounds that philosophy, since antiquity, is the rightful heir to Plato and not of the sophists.

In turn, the history of rhetoric usually blames philosophy for its unfortunate fate. According to both accounts, philosophy is the natural foe of rhetoric and vice versa. Nonetheless, we should not forget that both disciplines were born together, and have borrowed form each other concepts and postures in many occasions throughout Western history. In this work I have endeavored to show one of those occasions—one in which ancient rhetoric permeated modern philosophy.

I hope the arguments presented so far have proved convincing.

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