

KANTIAN EXTERNAL WORLD SKEPTICISM REFUTATION IN THE FOURTH PARALOGISM OF CRITIQUE FIRST EDITION

A REFUTAÇÃO KANTIANA DO CETICISMO DO MUNDO EXTERIOR NO QUARTO PARALOGISMO DA PRIMEIRA EDIÇÃO DA CRÍTICA

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ABSTRACT:

This paper aims to defend skepticism refutation relevance about external world objects from the Fourth Paralogism of Pure Reason Critique first edition (1781). We outline such skepticism origin in Cartesian idealism; then we indicate reasons why Kant interprets such a syllogism as a paralogism. Subsequently, we address steps of Kant's strategy for refuting idealism: 1) proving external objects immediacy and 2) proving imaginative faculty dependence on these same objects. Finally, we conclude objects we can perceive, and which can be considered external are only phenomenal objects.

KEYWORDS:

Skepticism, Cartesian Idealism, Fourth Paralogism, Idealism Refutation.

RESUMO:

Este trabalho objetiva defender a pertinência da refutação do ceticismo acerca dos objetos do mundo exterior a partir do Quarto Paralogismo da primeira edição da Crítica da Razão Pura (1781). Para tanto, delineamos a origem de tal ceticismo no idealismo cartesiano; em seguida, indicamos as razões pelas quais Kant interpreta tal silogismo como sendo um paralogismo. Posteriormente, abordamos os passos da estratégia de Kant para refutar o idealismo: 1) provar a imediatidade dos objetos externos e 2) provar a dependência da faculdade imaginativa desses mesmos objetos. Por fim, concluímos que os objetos que podemos perceber e que podem ser considerados exteriores são apenas os objetos fenomênicos.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE:

Ceticismo, Idealismo Cartesiano, Quarto Paralogismo, Refutação do Idealismo.

Introduction

Skepticism about the external world objects presents itself as a legitimate problem for transcendental philosophy insofar as Immanuel Kant [1724-1804] identifies transcendental realism as reason's insurmountable conflicts cause, making it impossible for man to be certain of knowledge. Furthermore, the argumentative framework very name of Critique of Pure Reason as Transcendental Idealism creates problems, as it allows it to be equated with other idealism forms and thus imputed as solipsistic, as Garve and Feder (2000, p. 53-4) did in famous review published anonymously in Göttingischen Anzeigen von Gelehrten Sachen in 1782.

In this view, we will present external world skepticism problem from the Fourth Paralogism onwards, since it is in this part *Critique* first edition that Kant places his transcendental idealism in clear opposition to Descartes' skeptical idealism and tries to refute it - Berkeleyan idealism was considered refuted through transcendental Aesthetics teachings, hence Kant doesn't consider it very much. Thus, Kant seeks to demonstrate external perception objects (phenomenal world) are immediately perceived by us, just like internal perception object (self as phenomenon), reality of these objects being testified to by empirical consciousness. Consequently, objects transcendental idealist considers to be real and "outside of us" are only external perception objects, that is, external phenomena.

However, since Kantian solution to refute Cartesian idealism consists to close the door on objects considered to be "outside of us" in transcendental sense (transcendental realism) and thus demonstrating these objects are not taken into account when dealing with matter, extensive bodies, in short, external experience objects, Kant seeks to offer a new designation for understanding what real objects world is, as well as a means distinguishing the of perception objects (real objects representations) from imagination objects (illusions, fictions, hallucinations, etc.).

We will now present Kant's strategy for refuting idealism, starting with unraveling ideality syllogism Cartesian genesis, since it is from Kantian interpretation this syllogism misunderstanding makes this syllogism a paralogism becomes evident. Next, we will address two steps that effectively structure Kant's refutational strategy, namely: 1) external perception immediacy proof and 2) imagination faculty dependence proof on this same perception. Finally, as concluding remarks, we will analyze implications of Kantian resolution this Paralogism.

1. Cartesian genesis of outside world skepticism

It is in the Fourth Paralogism of *Critique* first edition (1781) that Kant presents external world skepticism in a syllogism form and confronts it as if it were a paralogism generated by an idealist philosophy considers external objects reality to be uncertain or incapable of immediate perception. Despite this, Kant assumes solution to this problem presupposes results achieved by Copernican revolution in philosophy, which is why such a syllogism falsity unveiling (paralogism), as well as solution to skepticism problem about external world objects, are structured within semantic transcendental idealism framework.

This is what syllogism in question says:

That, whose existence can only be concluded as a given perception cause, has only a doubtful existence (*Zweifelhafte Existenz*). Now, all external phenomena (*alle äußere Erscheinungen*) are such a nature that their existence cannot be perceived immediately, but only concluded (*geschlossen*) as given perception cause. Therefore, all external sense objects existence (*Gegenstände äußerer Sinne*) is doubtful (CRP, A367).

Firstly, it is important to note syllogism mentioned above “has as its premises theses that could be considered Cartesian” (LANDIM FILHO, 2009, p.240) - which is why René Descartes [1596-1650] is identified as this syllogism author (REGO, 2013, p.329). However, attributing this syllogism authorship to Descartes is only valid if one considers only Cartesian initial stage thought (until discovery of cogito in the Second Meditation), thus ignoring its totality and systematicity, since it is controversial, to consider conclusion and even general objective of Cartesian philosophy as skeptical¹.

Therefore, because cogito discovery occurs independently of God, the world, in short, everything that might be outside subject itself, it is not incompatible with skepticism about outside world. Contrarily, if we only consider cogito, whose existence can be demonstrated in a “skeptical and solipsistic context” (LANDIM FILHO, 2009, p.238), then we can understand Cartesian philosophy reasonableness, at least in its initial theses, to question outside world existence.

More specifically, when Descartes raises dream argument in the First Meditation of *Meditações*, he not only calls into question knowledge that comes from senses, but also outside world knowledge, because he considers that even when we are situated in the most favorable circumstances possible for acquiring knowledge through senses, we cannot rigorously establish difference between waking state and

¹ Despite controversy surrounding whether ideality paralogism is structured on legitimately Cartesian premises, we believe First and Second Meditations theses support this legitimacy, although Cartesian philosophy in its systematicity rejects it completely. Thus, we affirm this paralogism is based on Cartesian theses, but with caveat these same theses disregard Cartesian philosophy in its completeness (LANDIM FILHO, 2009, p.248; STROUD, 2020, p.52).

sleeping state. In this sense, says Stroud (2020, p.52), “one must show or explain how it is possible for us to know things about the world, given sensible experiences we have are compatible with merely dreaming”.

In the Second Meditation, Descartes, in demonstrating the truth and cogito’s existence independence in relation to body and its knowledge sources and, furthermore, in securing thesis that cogito, that is, spirit, is easier to know than anything else (DESCARTES, 2019, p.150), he maintains doubt as to external world existence². In other words, indubitable cogito truth “is compatible with doubt about external things existence. It follows mind precede knowledge s, is more certain and more evident than body knowledge” (LANDIM FILHO, 2009, p.238).

In this way, we can say cogito knowledge is immediate, since it requires nothing than awareness (perception) thinking act itself (and its representations) to demonstrate its clear and indubitable existence. Other hand, external things existence cannot be demonstrated, but only inferred problematically and indirectly, since we attribute to it some idea causes that are in us. Consequently, the existence of external things can only be inferred from their possible effects, that is, the awareness we have of them (external things) is derived from ideas we possess and which we believe to be their faithful images: “an idea, in other words, referentially represents its cause (or cause under normal conditions), whatever it may be” (WILSON, 1999, p.75).

However, I received and admitted [...] several things as very certain and very manifest, which, however, I later recognized to be doubtful and uncertain. So, what were these things? They were the earth, the sky, the stars and all the other things I perceived through my senses. Now, what did I clearly and distinctly conceive in them? Certainly nothing other than ideas or thoughts these things presented themselves to my mind. And even now I don't deny these ideas are in me. But there was something else I affirmed, and which, because my habit to believe in it, I thought I perceived very clearly, although in fact I did not perceive it at all, namely, there were things outside of me from which these ideas came and to which they were entirely similar (DESCARTES, 2019, p.152).

From this initial stage in Cartesian philosophy development (the First and Second Meditations of book *Meditações*) Kant draws premises and conclusion that make up the syllogism of external relationship ideality. Furthermore, it is based on priority given to cogito knowledge, to knowledge detriment what is not in us, that is, external world, Kant calls Cartesian philosophy idealist. In this context, Descartes is an idealist not because he denies external objects world existence, but only because he considers their reality (*Wirklichkeit*) can never be assured by immediate perception (CRP, A369).

² For Descartes, proposition "I am" is true whenever I say it or simply conceive it in my mind, because it is a *conditio sine qua non* for doubt itself.

According to Kant, Cartesian idealist, also known as skeptical idealist, admits as indubitable only what can be perceived immediately, because it assumes only what is in us can be simple perception object. Therefore, Cartesian idealist considers real objects outside of us, because they are outside of our perception, can only be inferred (*geschlossen*) as our internal perceptions external causes (ideas), which leads us to conclude they can never be given immediately in perception.

I cannot, therefore, properly perceive external things, but only, based on my internal perception, conclude they exist, insofar as I consider this perception to be an effect (*wirkung*) which something external is the closest cause (*Ursache*) (CRP, A368).

In this scenario, etiological relationship between real external objects and internal perception can never be guaranteed, since this perception cause can be external and/or internal, known and/or unknown and even hidden, since “effect can originate in more (*mehr*) than one cause” (CRP, A368), which is why we can't say without a doubt that external perception objects - ideas or representations in Cartesian terminology - are more than “mere play (*spiel*) from our internal sense” or they “refer to real external objects (*äußere wirklich Gegenstände*) as their causes” (CRP, A368).

We are confined, at most, to what Descartes calls “ideas” things around us, representations of things or affairs states which, for all we know, may or may not have anything corresponding to them in reality. We are, in a sense, trapped inside these representations, at least as far as knowledge is concerned (STROUD, 2020, p.75).

In this view, Cartesian idealist states only internal perceptions have indubitable existence because, as they are situated in subject, they can be immediate perception objects. Thus, Cartesian idealist can say that he doesn't need to go outside himself to have an immediate perception of either his own existence or his representations existence, since both are internal sense objects. “Therefore”, says Kant, “Descartes was right to limit (*einschränkte*) all perception (*Wahrnehmung*) in strict sense to proposition: I am (as a thinking being)” (CRP, A367-8).

Although Kant admits some Cartesian theses as true, paralogism mentioned above is written specifically against Descartes (ALLISON, 1973, p.46), since these theses assumption is intended to strategically show they lead to external objects skepticism (LANDIM FILHO, 2009, p.240). However, Kantian terminology imbrication in structure context of ideality syllogism - such as “external phenomena” and “external meaning objects” - points to a Cartesian philosophy judgment through “Kantian glasses” (ALLISON, 1983, p.16), from which Kant can call Descartes' thought skeptical and

even unravel falsehood contained in such a syllogism (paralogism) and thus demonstrate skepticism about external objects world is not legitimate.

Having thus presented Cartesian origin of ideality syllogism, we need to indicate in what sense Kant considers this syllogism to be a paralogism, that is, false reasoning that leads to external world skepticism. Furthermore, we need to show how Kant maintains Cartesian thesis that “only what is in us (*in uns selbst*) can be immediately perceived (*unmittelbar wahrgenommen*)” (CRP, A367), since this thesis is taken as an indispensable criterion for indisputably demonstrating external objects reality. In this way, we will now present Kantian critique of the syllogism of ideality, because it is only with critique this syllogism falsity is revealed, thus allowing a external world objects skepticism refutation.

2. The “only refuge” from skeptical idealism

In the Fourth Paralogism of *Critique* first edition (1781), Kant positions his transcendental idealism in manifest opposition to Descartes' skeptical idealism³, as he considers his own idealism to be “only refuge” (*einzigste Zuflucht*) (CRP, A378) against skepticism of external objects world. In this way, condemning instead all idealism forms, Kant reaffirms “all phenomena ideality” (IDEM), just as he had established in *Transcendental Aesthetics*, in order to show that “idealism is not refuted purely and simply from a realist position, which demonstrates error of any and all idealist perspectives”, but which “presupposes transcendental idealism point of view” (FORLIN JÚNIOR, 2008, p.101).

Assuming transcendental idealism, Kant accepts the major syllogism premise of external relation ideality, which states “that which can only be concluded to exist as a given perceptions cause has only a doubtful existence” (CRP, A366), since causal reasoning is insufficient to demonstrate indubitable reality which cannot be simple perception object, that is, external objects considered to be things in themselves. So, as Cartesian idealist considers external objects are outside subject, and therefore exist in themselves independently the way they are perceived or known (LONGUENESSE, 2008, p.27), it is also a transcendental realist⁴. Now, in this transcendental realism context, a Cartesian idealism correlative term, Kant identifies the minor premise misunderstanding, which states “all external phenomena are such a

³ Kant also calls Descartes' skeptical idealism problematic idealism and empirical idealism. The first designation has this name (problematic idealism) because it makes the reality of objects in space “doubtful and undemonstrable” (CRP, B274), and therefore “problematic for us” (STROUD, 2020, p.195). The second designation (empirical idealism) has this name because it “links certainty to the immediate perception of objects and states that only what occurs in us is indubitable” (LANDIM FILHO, 2009, p.251). To avoid the confusion that these different designations could cause, we will henceforth use the designation “Cartesian idealism” to refer to the uncertainty of external objects.

⁴ For Kant, Descartes is a transcendental realist and, as such, considers the objects of the senses to be things that exist independently of the senses (CRP, A369). For this reason, these things can only be perceived indirectly, through inferential reasoning.

nature their existence cannot be perceived immediately, but only concluded as given perceptions cause” (CRP, A367), because transcendental realism itself is underlying conception that leads Cartesian idealist to take external phenomena to be real objects exist ontologically apart from senses and, consequently, “to deny mind has any immediate such objects experience” (ALLISON, 1983, p. 15).

It is important to note in aforementioned premise (minor premise) Kant strategically replaces “expression ‘external world’, eminently Cartesian, with expression ‘external phenomenon’, with transcendental idealism stamp” (REGO, 2013, p.331), intending to change this premise meaning, moving it to a new semantic sphere (transcendental idealism), whose foundation can somehow denounce an equivocation transforms this syllogism into a paralogism⁵.

Later, in the conclusion of this syllogism, Kant also replaces the Cartesian expression “external world” with his expression “objects of external sense” (CRP, A367), because he is trying to show that there is a sense in which these expressions are interchangeable and that, above all, makes it possible for him to refute Cartesian idealism within his own criterion (term), that is, by demonstrating that objects “outside of us” can be immediately perceived, thus contradicting the conclusion of the syllogism of ideality which states that “the existence of all objects of external sense is doubtful” (CRP, A367). However, in order to better understand the steps of this strategy, which at first glance seem obscure, we need to make two unavoidable observations.

The first observation to be made is that the expression “outside of us” (*außer uns*) is ambivalent (*Zweideutigkeit*), bringing with it “an unavoidable misunderstanding” (CRP, A373) that leads us to designate the objects said to be “outside of us” either as things in themselves (*Ding a sich selbst*) or as external phenomena (*äußeren Erscheinung*). For this reason, it is essential to distinguish the sense in which these objects are considered, namely the transcendental and empirical senses. Thus, while in the transcendental sense the expression “outside of us” designates things that exist in themselves, therefore independently of us, in the empirical sense the expression “outside of us” designates phenomenal objects that only exist in space as objects that depend on our external perception and can therefore be called external⁶.

⁵ According to Caygill (2000, p.250), Kantian conception of paralogism is an extension of the Aristotelian conception of this concept, that is, a paralogism is not only a reasoning that allows “falsely inferring the truth of an antecedent from the truth of a consequent premise” but is characterized by the “falsity of a reasoning in form, whatever its content” (CRP, A341/B399). Nevertheless, Kant goes beyond this definition of paralogism and states that it has a transcendental foundation (*transzendentalen Grund*), which leads us to a formally false conclusion (CRP, A341/B399).

⁶ Here it is important to mention that empirically exterior objects are transcendently interior, just like empirically interior objects, therefore objects that only appear to us (phenomena) are determined by the form of our perception. In contrast, transcendently exterior objects cannot be perceived, so they cannot be objects for us (ALTMANN, 2017, p.85; CARANTI, 2007, p.51).

However, since the Cartesian idealist does not have this critical distinction before him, he considers objects “outside of us” in only one sense, that is, in the transcendental sense, since he takes the objects of the external senses to be objects that exist separately from the senses themselves, “as an ontological substratum in a space independent of the conditions of representation” (REGO, 2013, p.331). Thus, the Cartesian idealist infers that objects that “exist independently (*unabhängig*) of us and our sensibility” (CRP, A369) are situated in a realm that can only be perceived indirectly and through causal reasoning, “concluding from the effect to the cause, in which it must always remain doubtful (*immer zweifelhaft*) whether the cause is in us (*in uns*) or outside us (*außer uns*)” (CRP, A372).

However, insofar as the Cartesian idealist is also a transcendental realist, he first maintains the reality of external objects by means of causal reasoning, which inevitably leads him into embarrassment, since “however perfect the awareness (*Bewußtsein*) of our representation of these things, it still takes a great deal to be certain that, if the representation exists, the corresponding object also exists” (CRP, A372). Subsequently, the transcendental realist finds no other way out except to reaffirm empirical idealism which, in turn, constitutes “one of the problems (*Problemen*) that human reason can hardly escape” (CRP, A372), since it cannot prove that the objects of the senses are things outside the senses themselves (CRP, A380), concluding that skepticism of the outside world is inevitable (CARANTI, 2007, p.55).

[...] transcendental realism leads to empirical idealism, which is the doctrine that the mind can only have immediate access to its own ideas or representations (the “ideal” in the empirical sense). The point is that, because the transcendental realist misunderstands the reality of spatial objects (“sense objects”), he is forced to deny that the mind has any immediate experience of such objects. Transcendental realism is therefore presented as the source of the pseudo-problem of the external world and the typically Cartesian version of skepticism that is associated with it (ALLISON, 1983, p.15).

In this scenario, we can say that the Cartesian idealist doubts that we can demonstrate the reality of the external world objects (said to be outside of us) through immediate perception, because he considers that these objects are real things that exist independently of the subject. In fact, the Cartesian idealist considers only the reality of my own existence to be demonstrable, since it can be perceived immediately as an object of simple perception. Thus, objects that are outside the subject, and therefore beyond the reach of our immediate perception, cannot be considered indubitably real, because they cannot be immediately linked in (empirical) consciousness; on the contrary, for the Cartesian idealist, “only what occurs in us is indubitable” (LANDIM FILHO, 2009, p.251).

However, despite the fact that the Cartesian idealist only admits the reality of the cogito, i.e. the subject and its representations, as indisputable, Kant considers him “a benefactor (*woblläter*) of human

reason” (CRP, A377), because he urges us to be suspicious of “common experience and not to immediately accept as a well-acquired possession what we may have only obtained by surprise” (CRP, A378). With this, Kant recognizes the legitimacy of the Cartesian idealist in questioning the reality of external objects insofar as they are considered “outside of us” in the transcendental sense (transcendental realism) and concluding that they can never be perceived immediately (CRP, A367).

The second observation to be made is that Kant takes as a criterion for refuting Cartesian idealism the very Cartesian conception tacitly contained in the premises of the syllogism of ideality, namely, “what occurs in us is immediately perceived and what is immediately perceived is indubitable” (LANDIM FILHO, 2009, p.241)⁷. With this, Kant concedes to the Cartesian idealist that the reality of an object can only be demonstrated indubitably if it is given in immediate perception (consciousness), thus rejecting any possibility of evoking inferential reasoning for this purpose⁸.

In view of this, when Kant submits “the premises for examination” (CRP, A367) of this syllogism, he highlights the central role of perception for the Cartesian idealist, since it is by referring to simple perception that he (the Cartesian idealist) directly and indubitably demonstrates the reality of the subject (and his thoughts), even though he doubts the reality of external objects precisely because it cannot be immediately perceived. It is for this reason that Kant seeks to demonstrate the reality of external objects or “outside us” (the subject of dispute here) by resorting to perception, because it is in immediate perception (consciousness) that he thinks he can establish a direct relationship with external objects and thus refute the Cartesian idealist, since “any non-skeptical explanation will have to deny that we have an indirect or inferential relationship with external objects” (STROUD, 2020, p.198).

Having made these observations, we now need to explain Kant’s strategy for demonstrating, firstly, that the syllogism of ideality is a paralogism and, secondly, that it is possible to undertake a refutation of the external world skepticism. The first task requires the important critical distinction between the empirical and transcendental senses of the expression “outside of us”, as elucidated in the first observation; while the second task requires that the objects outside of us are somehow given in immediate perception, since, as we indicated in the second observation, only with immediate perception can the reality of these objects be proven beyond doubt.

⁷ According to Caranti (2007, p.85), “in fact, the first premise of the Fourth Paralogism is that ‘my own existence is the sole object of mere perception’ (CRP, A367), or, equivalently, that Descartes was justified in limiting ‘all perception’ to the proposition ‘I, as a thinking being, exist’” (CRP, A367). Furthermore, Kant never questions the reality of the cogito.

⁸ It is in the context of perception that Kant concedes Descartes’ point when he, unable to perceive external objects (taken in the transcendental sense), states that “only what is in us can be immediately perceived and that only my own existence can be the object of a simple perception” (CRP, A367). In the same vein, both Landim Filho (2009, p.241) and Silvia Altmann (2017, p.104), when reconstructing the syllogism of ideality, highlight the fact that only the existence of what is immediately perceived can be qualified as indubitable.

3. The unveiling of paralogism in the syllogism of ideality

Kant's strategy for demonstrating that the syllogism of ideality is in fact a paralogism requires that the expression “outside of us” can be interpreted in both the transcendental and empirical senses, since if it is taken only in the transcendental sense, as the Cartesian idealist does, it prevents the syllogism in question from actually being considered a paralogism. In other words: if the syllogism of ideality is interpreted exclusively in the transcendental sense, it cannot be considered a paralogism, because its premises and conclusion turn out to be true, inevitably incurring the skepticism of the outside world.

That said, here's what the syllogism in question proclaims so that we can analyze it more closely.

That, whose existence can only be concluded as a cause of given perceptions, has only a doubtful existence. Now, all external phenomena are of such a nature that their existence cannot be perceived immediately, but only concluded as the cause of given perceptions. Therefore, the existence of all objects of external sense is doubtful (CRP, A367).

Now, when we use the transcendental sense of the expressions that designate something “outside of us” in the syllogism of ideality, such as “a cause of given perceptions” (major premise), “external phenomena” (minor premise) and “objects of external sense” (conclusion), we understand that the object in question are things that exist ontologically in a space independent of our sensibility, This makes it impossible for us to consider such a syllogism a paralogism, since Kant himself recognizes its validity when he states that “if we take external objects to be things in themselves, it is absolutely impossible (*schlechthin unmöglich*) to conceive how we are to arrive at knowledge of their reality outside of us, relying simply on the representation that is in us” (CRP, A378).

Despite this, Kant says that it is reasonable to “admit (*einräumen*) that something, which may be outside of us in the transcendental sense, is the cause of our external intuitions, but this something is not the object that we understand when we speak of the representations of matter and bodily things” (CRP, A372). In this way, Kant, on the one hand, concedes Descartes' point in concluding that the reality of ontologically external objects is doubtful⁹, but, on the other hand, emphasizes that it is not these objects that we should concern ourselves with when we speak of objects “outside of us”, but the objects of experience, which are “outside of us” because they are situated in space and time, a priori forms of our sensibility.

⁹ According to Rego (2013, p.333), Kant “needs to consider the existence of ‘outside us’ uncertain in some sense, which is certainly not that of ‘external phenomena’” to remain an idealist. On external objects in the transcendental sense, see the next chapter.

In the Kantism of the Fourth P[aralogism], the Cartesian skeptical doubt about the “outside of us” makes perfect sense insofar as Kant conceptually admits “the transcendental object, which is at the basis of external phenomena, as much as that which serves as the foundation of internal intuition” (A 379), and affirms the constitutive uncertainty about the existence of the object of this concept, that is, about this “foundation, which is unknown to us, of phenomena...” (A 380). In short, Kant cannot aim, in the Fourth P[aralogism], to refute the doctrine of the uncertainty of the “external world”, if this expression is understood, according to the spirit of the Cartesian First Meditation, as the domain of what is ontologically independent of our representative faculties (REGO, 2013, p.334).

Bearing in mind that the univocal interpretation of the syllogism of ideality in the transcendental sense (transcendental realism) inevitably leads to skepticism, the alternative left for Kant to reveal that the syllogism of ideality is properly a paralogism is to reinterpret its premises in line with transcendental idealism, that is, using the ambivalence of the term “outside of us” (CARANTI, 2007, p.80). With this strategy, Kant intends to denounce that there is a “deceptive appearance” (*trüglichen Scheine*) (CRP, A369) at the heart of this syllogism and that skepticism about the reality of objects in the outside world can be reduced to a simple misconception.

In view of this, Kant, on the one hand, concedes to the Cartesian idealist that the major premise is true if taken in the transcendental sense, as elucidated above, but, on the other hand, rejects that the minor premise can legitimately be taken in this same sense, since this premise establishes that external phenomena are considered things foreign to the senses themselves¹⁰. In this way, by affirming that external phenomena are things independent of the senses, the Cartesian idealist establishes an insurmountable barrier between human perceptual capacity and external phenomena.

Thus, Kant glimpses in the minor premise the misunderstanding that makes the syllogism of ideality a paralogism, namely the equivalence between external phenomena and ontologically external objects and, more precisely, the consequent impossibility of immediately perceiving these objects, since they are considered to be things in themselves, situated in a space independent of us. Certainly, this misunderstanding is based on the assertion that external phenomena are not found in any perception (CRP, A368), therefore, in any experience - this is the skepticism about the external world objects as a consequence of the “epistemic priority of ‘ideas’ over objects” (STROUD, 2020, p.210).

However, before proceeding with our analysis, it is important to reiterate that the unveiling of the existence of a paralogism in the syllogism of ideality only occurs because Kant introduces his terminology into the heart of this syllogism and thus reinterprets it according to his own philosophy, that

¹⁰ For the Cartesian idealist, we only have access to ideas or representations of external things. It is in this sense that Kant states: “Indeed, when we consider external phenomena as representations produced in us by their objects, as by things that are in themselves outside of us (*außer uns*), we do not see how we could know the existence of these things in any other way than by reasoning, concluding from the effect to the cause, in which it must always remain doubtful (*immer zweifelhaft*) whether the cause is in us or outside of us” (CRP, A372).

is, by fully considering the doctrine of transcendental idealism. Consequently, Kantian claim to reveal a paralogism in the syllogism of ideality and therefore refute idealism “does not operate on a neutral conceptual terrain, where Kant, by simple logical and conceptual analysis of the philosophical question of idealism, would be able to demonstrate the error in the idealists’ reasoning” (FORLIN JÚNIOR, 2008, p.97).

In this context, the essential function of the critical distinction between the empirical and transcendental meanings of the expression “outside of us (*außer uns*)” highlights, firstly, the centrality of the human way of perceiving objects and, secondly, reveals the existence of a paralogism that leads the Cartesian idealist to doubt the reality of external phenomena as understood by the transcendental idealist, that is, as empirically external objects.

Thus, while the first point refers to the teachings of transcendental idealism, since it expresses the Copernican revolution in philosophy, whose method establishes that objects must be regulated (*richten*) by our cognitive constitution (in the case of perceived objects, by the sensitive faculty), the second point clarifies that only in the context of transcendental idealism is the syllogism of ideality a paralogism, because the very Kantian terminology included in the syllogism indicates that the objects in dispute are not the objects themselves, which are outside of us in the transcendental sense, but the phenomenal objects, which are outside of us in the empirical sense. Therefore, “in the conclusion of the argument, what is presented as being under skeptical doubt are the ‘objects of the external sense’” (REGO, 2013, p.331).

The reasoning that seemed to raise an insoluble philosophical problem now turns out to be paralogistic, because it operates with the assumption that the objects of the senses are things in themselves, that is, independent of the senses. In short, the problem only makes sense from the perspective of the transcendental idealist, but as this perspective operates with a false presupposition, what we have is a false problem (FORLIN JÚNIOR, 2008, p.102).

Once the equivocation that makes the syllogism of ideality a paralogism is revealed, the inexorable uncertainty that seemed to interdict a possible demonstration of the reality of external phenomena is undone. With this, the next step for Kant is to refute idealism, that is, to prove the reality of external objects in an indubitable way, thus presenting it in immediate perception - this is what we will do now.

4. Refuting skeptical idealism

The doctrine of perception is the presupposition of Kant's strategy to refute Cartesian idealism using the criterion of idealism itself, that is, the assertion that the reality of external objects can only be demonstrated indubitably through immediate perception, therefore, without having to commit to inferential reasoning¹¹. In this way, Kant's refutational strategy consists of proving that we have immediate perception (and not imagination) of extended bodies, of matter, in short of objects that are situated in space. To this end, this strategy is structured in two steps, the second of which complements the first, namely: 1) the proof of the immediacy of external perception objects and 2) the proof of the dependence of the faculty of imagination on external perception.

Now, once the ideal character of space and time is established, the objects considered external (bodies, matter, etc.) are internalized, that is, they become dependent on human intuition (space), which implies that they can only exist as representations (GUYER, 1983, p.331). However, saying that they only exist as representations does not mean that their existence is ideal, as the Cartesian idealist argues¹², because it is precisely the representational or internal character of external objects that allows their reality to be immediately witnessed by consciousness.

Thus, the central point of Kantian empirical realism consists in the possibility of representations being founded on immediate perceptions, that is, on the "mere testimony of our simple awareness of ourselves" (CRP, A370), since it is this awareness that directly designates the presence of a reality in space, namely: sensation¹³ - this, "if it is applied to an object in general, without determining it, is called perception" (CRP, A374). Consequently, "all external perception, therefore, immediately demonstrates (*beweiset*) something real in space (*Wirkliches im Raum*), or rather, it is real itself (*Wirkliche selbst*) and, in this sense, empirical realism is beyond doubt, that is, our external intuitions correspond to something real in space" (CRP, A375).

In summary, we can say that the "internalization" of external objects makes it possible for transcendental idealism to indubitably demonstrate the reality of these objects, since this reality "does not need to be the conclusion of reasoning" (CRP, A371), since we don't need to go outside ourselves to guarantee its immediate relationship with our perception (empirical consciousness). It is for this reason

¹¹ In the last paragraph of the Postulates of Empirical Thought (CRP, A226/B273-4), Kant states that idealism establishes "a powerful (*mächtigen*) objection against" the real existence of objects which, although they are governed by the laws of experience, can only be objects of mediated perception (*mittelbar*). With this, we can delimit the strength of idealism's objection to objects of mediated perception, since objects of immediate perception retain their undoubted certainty.

¹² The existence of external objects for the Cartesian idealist is ideal because he takes these objects, "if their reality is admitted", to be things in themselves, which "exist independently (*unabhängig*) of us and our sensibility" (CRP, A369), which makes it impossible for these objects to be immediately perceived by us. Moreover, the Cartesian idealist can claim that we only have ideals or representations of external objects.

¹³ According to Kemp Smith (2003, p.303), Kant applies in the Fourth Paralogism the results reached in the Postulates of Empirical Thought in General, namely that "reality is revealed only in sensation".

that Kant can say that external perception, like internal perception, is immediately based on (empirical) consciousness, and that this is “sufficient proof of its reality” (IDEM).

In order to refute (*widerlegen*) empirical idealism as a false uncertainty regarding the objective reality of our external perceptions, it is already sufficient that external perception immediately proves (*beweise*) a reality in space (*eine Wirklichkeit im Raume*); this space, although it is in itself merely the form of representations, nevertheless has, in relation to all external phenomena (which are also nothing more than mere representations), an objective reality (CRP, A376-7).

Given that external perception necessarily involves the reality of something given a posteriori (sensation), as a constitutive component of a whole, that is, of external perception itself (KEMP SMITH, 2003, p.303), it can be defined as “the representation of a reality (*die Vorstellung einer Wirklichkeit*)” (CRP, A374) or even as being “the real itself” (CRP, A375). In this sense, the external real (sensation) that is “represented by perception” (CRP, A375) cannot be fantasized or even engendered by the faculty of imagination in an a priori way, that is, independently of sensation.

Therefore, by virtue of the occurrence of external perception, the faculty of imagination obtains material to produce “many objects which outside this faculty have no empirical place in space or time” (CRP, A374). For this reason, Kant can reinforce the proof of the immediacy of external perception with a complementary proof, which closes the door to the deceptions of the imagination, namely: “and let it be added that without perception (*ohne Wahrnehmung*), fiction itself (*Erdichtung*) and dream (*Traum*) are not possible, and that therefore our external senses, according to the data from which experience can come, have their corresponding real objects in space (*wirkliche korrespondierende Gegenstände*)” (CRP, A376-7).

In this way, external perception is a necessary condition for imaginary objects to exist and, if external perception didn't really occur, there could be no imaginary objects, such as the objects of fiction or dreams. Therefore, external perception occurs independently of the objects of the imagination and denying the reality of the former means also denying the very possibility of the latter (CARANTI, 2007, p.99).

However, although the representations produced by the imagination depend on external perception, they have no immediate relationship with sensation, which corresponds to the real or the material of “all the objects of external intuition” (CRP, A375). Consequently, the representations of the imagination do not refer directly to the real that is given to the senses (sensation), but to a game of the imagination (*Spiel der Einbildung*) which, starting from external perception, can give rise to “misleading representations, to which the objects do not correspond and in which the illusion must be attributed either to a phantasmagoria of the imagination (*Blendwerke der Einbildung*) (*in the dream*) or to a vice of the judgment (*Fehlritte der Urteilskraft*) (in the so-called errors of the senses)” (CRP, A376).

The reality of external objects [...] cannot be a mere appearance of reality because every fictional act of consciousness, responsible for the production of appearances of reality, depends on a reality as the source of the elements that it simply rearranges. Because every imaginative, fictional and deceptive production necessarily has “one foot in reality” externally, this reality precedes every possible fiction, and the representational external world cannot be a product of the representational internal world or be reduced to it (REGO, 2013, p.337).

However, once we admit that there can be representations of the imagination and even the possibility of being mistaken when we consider representations of the imagination to be representations of perception, Kant establishes a criterion so that we can avoid the “false appearance (*falschen Scheine*)” and thus distinguish a misleading representation, for example, a dream or a hallucination, from a real representation (perception), namely: What is in accordance with a perception according to empirical laws (*empirischen Gesetzen*), is real (CRP, A376, Kant’s emphasis)¹⁴.

With this criterion, Kant evokes for debate “the form of experience (*die Form der Erfahrung*)” (CRP, A376) (intuition and concepts) whose application to the representations of perception establishes a necessary link between them, thus producing a complete chain of all representations “as given by the senses” (CRP, A121). From this perspective, it is possible to legitimately determine a cause from the effect, “as when, for example, we infer the existence of a magnetic force as the cause of the movement of a body” (ALTMANN, 2017, p.105, footnote), but this, it is important to stress, is only possible in the field of experience, which is the only real field for us.

In view of this, the debate shifts from the “internal versus external” dichotomy to the “illusion, dream, fantasy versus experience, objective knowledge” dichotomy (REGO, 2013, p.340), which makes it possible to relate the accidental (contingent) connection between the representations of the imagination to the subjective unity of consciousness and, conversely, to relate the necessary connection between the representations of perception to the objective unity of consciousness (transcendental unity of apperception) (CRP, B139-40) - it is this objective consciousness that unifies all empirical consciousness and institutes universal laws for the representations of perception.

However, as much as there is a criterion for distinguishing the representations of the imagination from the representations of perception, there is an evasive question that maintains its strength and that seems to make Kant's strategy for refuting idealism insufficient, namely: the Cartesian hypothesis formulated in the *Meditações*, specifically in the Third Meditation (DESCARTES, 2019, p.155-

¹⁴ For Kant, the possible confusion between representation of the imagination and real representation, as well as its solution, concerns both his idealism and Cartesian idealism since both distinguish the regularity of experience from sporadic cases of deception (hallucination). In the case of the Cartesian idealist, even if he were to admit that experience is produced by an Evil Genius, it would be possible to distinguish general hallucination, which would correspond to the regularity of experience, from irregular cases (CARANTI, 2007, p.98).

6), that there may be an unknown hidden faculty capable of producing by itself the representations that we consider external, which we believe are not produced by ourselves.

However, we think that the answer to this neuralgic question has already been given. Kant talks about the tribunal of reason and the consequent unveiling of the fundamental sources of knowledge (CRP, AXII). As a result of this tribunal, i.e. the thorough examination of its own capacity for knowledge, reason can determine with precision and certainty what it can (scope) or cannot know (limits), thus ensuring its own consistency and credibility to “continue to be summoned as a judge in the court of all disputes” (BONACCINI, 2003, p.168).

Thus, since the tribunal of reason circumscribes the legitimate aspirations of reason and simultaneously censures its unfounded pretensions, Kant can claim that there is no faculty of reason that is hidden from reason itself, since what is in it cannot escape its sieve, that is, its own knowledge. Therefore, it is reason's self-analysis that grants it the legitimacy to indicate which faculties it does or does not possess. However, if reason cannot fully determine its own faculties, it cannot reliably establish the sources, limits and extent of human knowledge, which invalidates any claim to knowledge, even limited knowledge such as that defended by the transcendental idealist.

In view of what has been said about Kant's answers to the questions that could undermine transcendental idealism itself, that is, the confusion between the representations of the imagination and the representations of perception, as well as the possibility of the existence of an unknown hidden faculty, he can reaffirm the two steps of his refutative strategy, namely: the proof of the immediacy of external perception objects and its complementary proof, that is, the proof of the imagination's dependence on external perception for material to produce its own fictitious objects.

With this refutative strategy, Kant elevates the status of external objects to the level of empirical apperception as an object of the internal sense, since he demonstrates that both are “completely different representations but are not conceived of as distinct things” (CRP, A379). Furthermore, he considers that the reality of these representations can be attested to immediately by consciousness, since they are simply representations of and in the subject. This eliminates any possibility of referring to inferential reasoning to demonstrate the reality of these representations.

But external objects (bodies) are mere phenomena (*bloß Erscheinungen*), and therefore also nothing more than a kind of my representations, whose objects are only something through these representations, but are nothing outside of them. External things exist, therefore, just as much as I myself exist and these two existences rest, it is true, on the immediate testimony of my consciousness (*auf das unmittelbare Zeugnis meines Selbstbewusstseins*), only with the difference that the representation of myself, as of a thinking subject, is simply referred to the internal sense, but the representations that designate extensive beings are also referred to the external sense (CRP, A370-1).

Now, assuming that we cannot perceive what is not in us, “the transcendental object (*das Transzendentale Objekt*), which is the basis of external phenomena, just as much as that which serves as the basis of internal intuition, is in itself neither matter nor a thinking being” (CRP, A379-80), and, moreover, it is not an object that we should consider when we refer to experience. Consequently, this object, which evades our internal and external perception and thus goes “beyond the limits in which possible experience (*möglich Erfahrung*) can give us its object” (CRP, A380), is completely unknown to us. However, it is not this transcendental object that is at issue (CRP, A373), but the empirical object, since it is this that is subject to the spatio-temporal relations of our perception, and which can be given in a possible experience.

Furthermore, since the objects in dispute were spatial objects, which we can guarantee are real through immediate perception (CRP, A371), Kant can affirm that “the strictest idealist cannot demand that it be proved that our perception corresponds to the object outside us (in the strict sense)” (CRP, A375-6), since “no one can feel outside himself (*man kann doch außer sich nicht empfinden*), but only in himself, and therefore all self-consciousness provides us with nothing but our own determinations” (CRP, A378). Therefore, the problem of skepticism about the reality of the external world objects is illegitimate, because it was structured on a false presupposition, that is, on the mistake of taking the objects of the external senses (phenomena) for objects independent of the senses (things in themselves).

Final considerations

Given that skepticism about the external world objects was based on transcendental realism (*transzendentale Realist*), in other words, on objects that “(if their reality is admitted) [...] exist independently of us and our sensibility” (CRP, A369), Kant sought to determine that this foundation was mistaken, given that the skeptic considered that the objects of the external senses were things distinct from the senses themselves. Because this misconception was hidden, skepticism was not only justifiable, but also inevitable.

However, once it was established that the misunderstanding of skepticism about the objects of the outside world could only be revealed with the advent of transcendental idealism, that is, with the essential critical distinction of the same objects considered in the empirical and transcendental senses, Kant could simultaneously designate that the syllogism of ideality was actually a paralogism and that the incidence in the skepticism of the outside world stemmed from a confusion in the way of considering objects.

Given this critical distinction, the objects that are valid for us are not objects taken in the transcendental sense, but objects taken in the empirical sense, since these objects depend on our mode of perception. Thus, the objects that the skeptic questions are not the objects that we can perceive, that is, the objects of a possible experience – “which is called the external object when it is represented in space, and the internal object when it is represented simply in the relation of time” (CRP, A373) - but “the transcendental object (*Der transzendentale Gegenstand*)” (CRP, A372), which we cannot perceive or know (LONGUENESSE, 2008, p.28).

Now, if the objects doubted by the skeptic (transcendental objects) are not the objects we can perceive, then these objects do not come into question when we refer to matter, to extended bodies, in short, to the objects of the senses. For this reason, even if the transcendental idealist considers objects taken in an empirical and transcendental sense to be external to us, only the objects of the first designation are the objects of our senses, since their very constitution is necessarily composed of the form of perception.

That said, we can affirm that the things we perceive are not the things that could exist in themselves and that to draw up a correspondentalist theory between these things is an inaccuracy, firstly because the things we perceive are constituted by our own mode of perception, whereas the things that could exist in themselves would be independent of any contribution from our faculties, and secondly, considering the same things in two different modes does not mean considering them as different things: while the latter consideration designates the reality of different things (*verschiedene Dinge*) (CRP, A379), the former consideration designates whether or not they depend on our mode of perception.

In this sense, objects dependent on our mode of perception, which appear to us as determined by spatio-temporal relations (phenomena), are the only objects that can be given to our senses. However, as these phenomenal objects cannot exist independently of us and our senses, they only have existence and reality in the realm of human perception. Consequently, if we abstract man or simply his mode of perception, these phenomenal objects, with the properties and peculiarities that appear to us, are nowhere to be found, or else they wouldn't exist.

Having established the dependence of phenomenal objects on human intuition, Kant can say that we don't need to go outside ourselves to prove the reality of these objects, since they are immediately perceived. From this it follows that there is no priority of internal phenomena over external phenomena, because although the latter are “completely distinct specific phenomena (*spezifische ganz unterschiedene Erscheinungen*)” (CRP, A379), they have their reality witnessed immediately by (empirical) consciousness.

With this, Kant obtains the basis to refute skeptical idealism within his own criteria, that is, accepting as unquestionably real only that which is in us and can be immediately perceived. Thus, since

the objects in question were the objects of the external senses - since at no point does Kant question the reality of the empirical self (cogito) - he can ensure that the reality of these objects is not based on inferential reasoning, but on immediate perception, since our consciousness directly testifies to this reality.

Having thus demonstrated the immediacy of external perception objects, Kant makes use of a complementary thesis, which has the dual function of eliminating any possibility of the imagination producing the world of external objects and ratifying the reality of external perception, namely: the dependence of the faculty of imagination on external perception, since the faculty of imagination only has the material to produce its imaginary objects if there is external perception. Therefore, the reality of external perception is demonstrated simultaneously by immediate awareness and by the existence of imaginary objects.

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