ANTITHETICAL-SPECULATIVE PROBLEMS IN KANT'S PHILOSOPHY

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Abstract. *The text focuses upon most important antithetic problems of Kant's philosophy. The main point is that one should make a difference between dialectic and antithetic. Dialectic develops at the level of thinking and is based on contradiction, while antithetic is found at the level of reality, and has to do with opposition, as in the case of opposition of forces. Besides, taking into account Kant's contributions before his major Critique, the author explains how the German philosopher dealt upon problems of physics, offering a philosophical view upon them.*

Key words*: dialectic, antithetic, force, opposition, contradiction.*

The exegetes of Immanuel Kant's works have paid little attention to his early writings, from the "heuristic era", considered more like something peculiar (*merkwürdig*) for the future philosopher[1]. That is because they were looking for traces (*Spuren*) of the works that were to come later. In spite of the fact that the "powerful insights" from the early works "have made many scientists, like Helmholtz, for example, or Dubois Reymond, to consider the vocation for exact sciences as the true aptitude of Kant and to regret that he did not continue to constantly work inside the field of positive science"[2].

From the beginning, Kant was mainly interested in the *motion* of things in general, and its relation with the forces that determinate it. To him it is obvious that "every body that is in motion has a force"[3]. There are "alive" forces, essential and efficient, that "give life" to bodies, transpose them from repose to motion, as well as "dead" forces, that act from outside. The first ones are infinite, the last ones are finite. "Giving life", awakening or resurrecting to life (*Lebendigwerdung*), is a concept with scholastic nuances (*Vivification*)[4], often linked to the soul (*Seele*), too, with the meaning of active force (*vis activa*) or driving force (*vis motrix*)[5]. These forces have a relative character that determines *antithetical* situations. Fr a body, the "alive" force is the "dead" force for another one that it influences from outside, and vice versa. An infinite and alive force is influenced by the finite ones, that are "dead" for the first body, but "alive" for the other bodies, through which a sort of "equilibrium" among the motions of bodies is produced. Neither bodies in infinite motion, nor bodies in total repose, this allows the distinction between *possible* and *real* motion, and the passing (*Übergang*) from the state of repose to that of motion, respectively. This way Kant arrives to the division of motion in "two classes", based on opposite forces[6].

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[1] Rosenkranz, K., (1840), *Geschichte der Kantischen Philosophie*, in I. Kant, *Sämtliche Werke*, vol. XII, Leipzig, p. 131.

[2] Petrovici, I., (1936), *Viaţa şi opera lui Kant*, [Kant's Life and Works], Bucharest, p. 44.

[3] Kant, I., *Gedanken von der wahren Schätzung der lebendigen Kräfte*, in I. Kant, *op. cit*., p. 17.

[4] *Ibidem*, p. 185.

[5] *Ibidem*, p. 20-21.

[6] Ueberweg, F., (1880), *Grundriss der Geschichte der Philosophie*, vol. III, Berlin, p. 179.

Obviously, his conception is dynamical and allows Kant to explain heat, as well as light (flame, in case of fire), as propagation of vibration motion along the ether[7]. Nevertheless, there is no reference to motion without limits, and Kant goes back to motion and repose and to their relative character. He also refers to the action and counteraction (*Wirkung und Gegenwirkung*) of forces that can produce relative situations of repose of bodies that are not moving from one another, but are moving together with the medium they are placed in[8].

This confrontation of opposed forces is characteristic to matter in general, to the inner structure of bodies, made of *monads*. Nevertheless, one does not refer to mere punctual particles that are added to one another, but to the process of dynamical fulfillment or filling of space (*Raumerfüllung*) through the opposed forces of *repulsion* and *attraction*, which, in case their action is equal, fix the limits of the body[9]. It is assumed that the monads should be *elastic* in order to resist to opposed forces, which nevertheless find themselves in a relative equilibrium that does not exclude the predominance of one of the forces, the repulsive one, for example, which could determine the disintegration of the body.

Such ideas led Kant to the conclusion that, from the physical point of view, Earth's rotation motion should suffer some changes, too. One refers mainly to the attraction of Sun and Moon over the liquid mass, to what Engels called "the discovery of the action of braking the Earth's rotation motion by the tide"[10]. "Discovery" understood and scientifically sustained by W. Thomson and P. G. Tait[11] (1867) only a century after Kant's work (*Untersuchung der Frage, ob die Erde im ihrer Umdrehung, um die Achse einige Veränderung erlitten habe*, 1754)[12]. This is not a "discovery" in the usual meaning of the word, which derived from a scientific research, but a consequence or particularization of the general antithetical-speculative thesis of the interaction of opposed forces, of action and reaction of these two over a certain body. Thus it was natural, on the same direction, for Immanuel Kant to ask himself whether the Earth, as any other body or being, does not age or get older since it is placed under the influence of many contrary forces[13]. Taking into account the actual appearance of the Earth, one may make presuppositions about its anterior state. There are, in fact, in the "actual life of Earth" (*im Leben der Erde*), active processes that, one way or another, contribute to the transformation of its appearance: chemical, physical, and meteorological processes, floods, changes in the streams of waters, volcanic eruptions, earthquakes, etc.[14] Kant wrote especially about the earthquakes from his times[15].

Based on this type of dynamical and antithetical-speculative conception over matter in general, matter whose elementary particles, named monads, are more likely "points of energy" (*points d'énergie*)[16], it was natural for Immanuel Kant to consider that not only the Earth, but the entire Universe must have his own natural history. Moreover, this time he makes a "discovery" that has far more influence later. Engels considers that "The kantian theory about the birth of all celestial bodies from rotating nebular masses represented the greatest progress astronomy made since Copernicus"[17]. As a matter of

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[7] *Ibidem*, p. 181.
[8] Kant, I., *Neue Lehrbegriff der Bewegung und Ruhe*, in I. Kant, *op. cit.*, vol. V, p. 278-282.
[9] Ueberweg, F., *p. cit.*, p. 182.
[10] Engels, F., (1964), *Anti-Dühring*, in Marx, Engels, *Opere* [Works], Bucharest, Ed. Politică, p. 14.
[11] Engels, F., *Dialectica naturii* [Dialectic of nature], in Marx, Engels, *op. cit.*, p. 406-410.
[12] Kant, I., in *Sämtliche Werke*, *ed. cit.*, vol. VI.
[13] Kant, I., *Die Frage: ob die Erde veralte?*, in *Sämtliche Werke*, *ed. cit.*, vol. VI.
[14] Rosenkranz, K., *op. cit.*, p. 135.
[15] Kant, I., *op. cit.*, p. 227-281.
[16] Höffding, H., (1906), *Histoire de la philosophie moderne*, Paris, p. 41.
[17] Engels, F., *Anti-Dühring*, *ed. cit.*, p. 35.

fact, this one is not a "discovery" at all, as Engels names it[18], it does not belong to astronomy (as a science based on observations), but to cosmogony. More precisely, it belongs to a transcendent and speculative cosmogony. Engels' praises, from a materialist-dialectic perspective, are justified, but with some modifications. Kant does not forget the "infinity of the creative force of divinity" (*die Unendlichkeit der Schöpfungskraft Gottes*)[19], but considers that the act of creation is never ended (*Die Schöpfung ist niemals vollendet*), and that what happened, what we actually see, and what will happen belong to "the development of a plan of divine revelation"[20]. Moreover, the fact that Laplace himself reaches to the same conclusions, but in 1796 (Kant did it in 1755), being preceded by Lambert (1761) and Herschel[21], proves that the issue of Kant's "discovery" was not far off the scholars' preoccupations from that time, and this will happen again in case of Schelling. But Kant had an antithetical-speculative method that offered him advantages, while the professional astronomers were grounding their theses just on observations. It is not accidental that Kant's work is published in 1755 without the name of the author. If he had been aware of the importance of his "discovery", Kant would not have omitted his name from the writing.

It is certain that the entire theory on the genesis of celestial bodies from a sort of chaos (*Chaos*) – as Kant does not speak about nebulae (*Nebelflecke*), but Herschel does – is explained through *the opposition of attraction and repulsion forces*. Nowadays, nebulae are considered galaxies, which neither Herschel, nor Engels knew. This means that the Universe, which that time meant "the visible sky" equal to Milky Way and its neighbor zones, was not born from a nebula, but *is* a nebula, meaning galaxy. The fact that some nebulae are not galaxies is a different issue. Significant is that the repulsive force, which Kant spoke about, and, after him, Schelling, was not taken into account by any scholar and even today is dubitable (the fifth force in physics – the repulsion force, next to the attraction force, electromagnetic force, strong and weak forces). This makes both Kant's theory, and his contemporaries' ones to be dubitable. We are not mentioning any more Kant's fantasies related, for example, the fact that all planets are inhabited, a. s. o.

It seems that, after a few decades – fact that denies the discontinuity proclaimed by Kant" exegetes and the historians of philosophy, between the pre-critical period, when he was interested in nature's sciences, and the critical one – Kant (1791) was still preoccupied b these ideas and even considered he had been plagiarized[22]. It is certain that he was more interested in the antithetical-speculative aspect of the method than the results of their application. In 1794, this does not stop him to publish one more paper, in the same spirit, this time with reference not only to the transcending towards the beginning of the world, but also towards its end. Or, there also appears the opposition of the two forces, raised to the level of opposed principles (*entgegengesetzte Prinzipien*). The end of the world, of every thing (*Ende aller Dinge*) would coincide, if not with reunion (*Coalition*), then at least with the neutrality of the opposed principles[23], with the annihilation of every opposition[24].

Kant was aware of the antithetical-speculative method he was proposing. Proof: his attempt to distinguish between "opposition" (*Entgegensetzung*) and "contradiction" (*Wiederspruch*), in other words, between "antithetics" and "dialectics". He uses a

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[18] Idem, *Dialectica naturii* [Dialectic of nature], in *ed. cit.*, p. 334.

[19] Kant, I., *Allgemeine Naturgeschichte und Theorie des Himmels*, in *Sämtliche Werke*, *ed. cit.*, vol. VI, p. 154.

[20] *Ibidem*, p. 169.

[21] Rosenkranz, K., *op. cit.*, p. 132-133.

[22] *Loc. cit.*

[23] Kant, I., *Das Ende aller Dinge*, in *Sämtliche Werke, ed. cit.*, vol. VII, p. 427.

[24] Rosenkranz, K., *op. cit.*, p. 250.

neologism to speak, in general, about the first two, the term *Opposition*. *Opposition* is either *logic*, through contradiction, or *real*, without contradiction[25]. In the first case, about the same object *one affirms* and *denies* something at the same time, so the principle of non-contradiction is broken. *Opposition* is realized through two contradictory judgements or propositions. In the second case, the same *object* has two opposed predicates. Here, by "predicates" one means: features, characteristics, forces. These, being opposed, cannot be considered other than relatively, as *positive* or *negative*. A force that contributes to the moving of a body may be called "positive" in relation with other force that *opposes* to that change of place. But both are present (*anwesend*) and simultaneously belong to the same body. They do not contradict each other and are "positive" at the same extent, although they oppose to each other.

All these prove the attempt of Kant to philosophically legitimate the antithetics, as different from dialectics. Only the last one is not acceptable from a logical point of view, because it brakes the principle of non-contradiction.

Finally, Kant goes back to these problems from the speculative tetradic perspective of the table of categories from *The Critic of Pure Reason*: quantity, quality, relation, and modality[26], splitting "the science of nature" in: foronomy, dynamics, mechanics, and phenomenology. This splitting is arbitrary, and obliges Kant to speak four times about the same issues, matter, for instance. The important fact is that, no matter its form, matter has the same antithetical characteristics. Whatever way it is conceived, matter is what is in motion:
1) *foronomical*, needing, in order to move in an opposite direction, a force differing from the one that initially moves it; 2) *dynamical*, filling the space not by its mere existence, but because of repulsive and attraction forces;
3) *mechanical*, moving through the action and counteraction of forces;
4) *phenomenological*, achieving through a force that is opposed to the space in which it moves. The antithetical aspects of motion maintain in all the four perspectives on matter.

Although they do not contradict logic, whose principles do not brake, the antithetical characteristics of matter, nature, and universe in general, are not considered by Immanuel Kant as belonging to logic, a logic that differs from the usual one, eventually. On the contrary, appealing to intellect and reason, which he distinguishes in his own way, he will reject everything that does not obey their laws. In principle, he should not reject the domain of the antithetical; nevertheless, this does not reduce to the field of experience, but, as Kant himself tried to show during his youth, it refers also to what goes beyond, what transcends the field of every possible experience. This does not mean that the historians and Kant's exegetes are entirely true in declaring that he spurned his own early writings. He did it partially, referring to those that were aiming to the transcendent as such, that is the speculative in its own right.

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[25] Kant, I., *Versuch, den Begriff der negativen Grössen in die Weltweisheit einzuführen*, in Sämtliche Werke, *ed. cit.*, vol. I, p. 121.

[26] Kant, I., *Metaphysische Anfangsgründe der* Naturwissenschaft, in *Sämtliche Werke*, *ed. cit*, vol. V, p. 317.

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