

The functions of cognition and the unity of the Kantian system

Funciones del conocimiento y unidad del sistema kantiano

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Review of: Martin Bunte, *Erkenntnis und Funktion. Zur Vollständigkeit der Urteilstafel und Einheit des Kantischen Systems*, Berlin, De Gruyter, 2016, 359 pp. ISBN-13: 9783110488029.

The work of Martin Bunte “*Erkenntnis und Funktion. Zur Vollständigkeit der Urteilstafel und Einheit des Kantischen Systems*” focuses on two of the most important questions addressed to the Kantian philosophy: is the table of categories complete? Is it possible to defend Kant from the accusation of an irreparable dualism between things in themselves and appearances and think about the possibility of an affection through the thing in itself inside the Kantian perspective?

Bunte aims to solve these two important problematic points of the interpretation of *the Critique of pure reason* through the reconstruction of the value of the functions implied in the process of knowledge. He focuses on the metaphysical and the transcendental deduction and on the roles played by categories, schemata, ideas and apperception.

The author divides his works into three chapters: the functions of knowledge, the transcendental subjectivity and the transcendental objectivity.

In the first chapter the author focuses on the origin of categories as subjective functions of the judgements. Considering several critics of Kant (for instance Paton, Priel, Wolff and Schulthess), Bunte stresses the different kinds of functions of cognition (logical, real and ideal) and their possible interpretations as rule, form or activity. More in detail, one of the most relevant epistemic topic of his research concerns the origin of the functions of objective cognition, namely categories. The author shows how categories can be defined as subjective forms of the thinking, responsible for the determination of objectivity insofar they are applied to experience as functions of the imagination through the inner sense (schemata).

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Another important theme of the first chapter concerns the correct interpretation of Kant's notion of criteria of truth: as the Kantian philosophy suggests, the aim of epistemologists is not to ask if knowledge is possible, rather how knowledge is possible, what the criteria to identify the truth is and what its object is. Following the passages of the *Critique of pure reason*, Bunte distinguishes formal and material criteria of truth, and question in which sense they can be necessary or sufficient criteria.

In the second chapter, the author aims at demonstrating that the table of judgement is based on the apperception and how the completeness of the table can be demonstrated. He provides a reconstruction of the Kantian notion of transcendental subjectivity, distinguishing intellect, reason (as faculty of the principles, logical faculty or transcendental faculty) and apperception as principle of unity of the rules of the concepts at the base of the possibility of experience.

In the third chapter Bunte shifts his focus on the object, questioning its possibility to affect the subject through senses. The Kantian philosophy is not only a transcendental idealism but also an empirical realism: the condition of possibility of the unity of our knowledge is based on the subject and at the same time no knowledge is possible without experience.

The author then clarifies the Kantian conception of experience text through the distinctions of its different levels of complexity: from the simple impressions and organized structures of perceptions to the actual empirical knowledge, namely, experience, seen as the unification (*nexus*) of perception in a judgement.

Finally, he focuses on the representation of the things in themselves and the relation between objects of experience and things in themselves, which he considers both transcendental and transcendent. More in detail, he aims at solving the problem of the affection through the things in themselves, referring to the symbols, namely, through a particular function to apply the category of causality (in its aspect of free causality).

The structure of the book reflects Bunte's interpretation of the Kantian philosophy. According to the author Kant proposes an epistemology based on the duality between subject and object, the relation of which can be described in terms of activity and passivity: the object, indeed, must have an effect (affection) on the subject in order to start the process of knowledge.

Besides, subject and object are considered from two point of view: formal and material, namely, transcendental and empirical. According to Bunte, subject and object are called transcendental because not only because they are at the base of the possibility of experience, but also because they are beyond experience. To defend Kant from the accusation of a redundant multiplication of subject and object and to explain how the something beyond experience can be regarded as object of knowledge, Bunte clarifies the notion of knowledge in his interpretation of Kant. Knowledge is the unification of concept and intuition in a judgement, or in other words, the synthesis of the intuitions given in experience in accordance to the objective laws of the thinking. The activity of the intellect provides unity to the representation of a object given in intuition through space and time, which are conditions of the possibility of the experience of it.

But how can subjective rules of the thinking be objective functions of the determination of the object? To answer this question, the author reconstructs Kant's transcendental deduction of the categories, clarifying that categories have a subjective origin (and for this reason Kant's perspective is a transcendental one) and that these concepts, based on the subjective transcendental activity, have an effect on the empiric level, to which they provide order and unity.

Moreover, interpreting the notions of objectivity and subjectivity in Kant, Bunte aims to clarify the relation between activity and receptivity in the process of knowledge. In particular, he questions: 1) how can the relation between transcendental object and transcendental subject be regarded in terms of affection?; 2) how can the relation between transcendental and empirical subject be defined as self-affection?; 3) how can the necessary correlation of affection and self-affection plausibly work?; 4) how can the relation between transcendental and empirical object be intended?

The author provides a solution to these questions, reconstructing the Kantian system of cognition, following the thesis that there is a correspondence between the epistemic structures of cognition and the functions of the thinking.

To conclude, the work of Martin Bunte is a new interesting attempt to question the problem of the completeness of the table of judgements. The author gives a clear contribution in solving this question by elaborating an inquiry on the Kantian transcendental philosophy, which involves central topics such as: the different functions of the pure intellect (ideal, real, discursive and logical), the apperception and the thing in itself. Moreover, the book is systematically organised and the schemes presented in the last part are helpful to give an effective contribution to synthesize and visualise the manifold functions of cognition and help in understanding the value of the topics on which Kant focused. For instance, the clarification of the ontological value of the functions of the intellect as well as of the things in themselves still originates debates nowadays. Bunte underlines in many passages that the Kantian philosophy is not only an idealism but also a realism and he refers to things in themselves as transcendent base and transcendental condition of phenomena. But in which sense are things in themselves transcendent objects? Is this the only possible interpretation of the text? Does it lead to a multiplication of types of objects and realities?

As we can see from these and other questions, the book of Bunte opens a debate which originates in the problem of the completeness of categories and leads to the current topics inquired by logic, ontology and metaphysics.

